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The Nabob

Alphonse Daudet, W. Blaydes

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ALPHONSE DAUDET

The Nabob

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH
BY W. BLAYDES

WITH A CRITICAL INTRODUCTION
BY PROF. W. P. TRENT

A FRONTISPIECE AND NUMEROUS
OTHER PORTRAITS WITH
DESCRIPTIVE NOTES BY
OCTAVE UZANNE

P. F. COLLIER & SON
NEW YORK

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INTRODUCTION

DAUDET once remarked that England was the last of foreign countries to welcome his novels, and that he was surprised at the fact, since for him, as for the typical Englishman, the intimacy of home life had great significance. However long he may have taken to win Anglo-Saxon hearts, there is no question that he finally won them more completely than any other contemporary French novelist was able to do, and that when but a few years since the news came that death had released him from his sufferings, thousands of men and women, both in England and in America, felt that they had lost a real friend. Just at the present moment one does not hear or read a great deal about him, but a similar lull in criticism follows the deaths of most celebrities of whatever kind, and it can scarcely be doubted that Daudet is every day making new friends, while it is as sure as anything of the sort can be that it is death, not estrangement, that has lessened the number of his former admirers.

"Admirers"? The word is much too cold. "Lovers" would serve better, but is perhaps too expansive to be used of a self-contained race. "Friends" is more appropriate because heartier, for hearty the relations between Daudet and his Anglo-Saxon readers certainly

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were. Whether it was that some of us saw in him that hitherto unguessed-at phenomenon, a French Dickens—not an imitator, indeed, but a kindred spirit—or that others found in him a refined, a volatilized "Mark Twain," with a flavour of Cervantes, or that still others welcomed him as a writer of naturalistic fiction that did not revolt, or finally that most of us enjoyed him because whatever he wrote was as steeped in the radiance of his own exquisitely charming personality as a picture of Corot's is in the light of the sun itself—whatever may have been the reason, Alphonse Daudet could count before he died thousands of genuine friends in England and America who were loyal to him in spite of the declining power shown in his latest books, in spite even of the strain which *Sapho* laid upon their Puritan consciences.

It is likely that a majority of these friends were won by the two great Tartarin books and by the chief novels, *Fromont, Jack, The Nabob, Kings in Exile,* and *Numa,* aided by the artistic sketches and short stories contained in *Letters from my Mill* and *Monday Tales* (*Contes du Lundi*). The strong but overwrought *Evangelist, Sapho* —which of course belongs with the chief novels from the Continental but not from the insular point of view—and the books of Daudet's decadence, *The Immortal* and the rest, cost him few friendships, but scarcely gained him many. His delightful essays in autobiography, whether in fiction, *Le Petit Chose* (*Little What's-his-Name*), or in *Thirty Years of Paris* and *Souvenirs of a Man of Letters,* doubtless sealed more friendships than they made; but they can be almost as safely recommended as the more notable novels to readers who have yet to make Daudet's acquaintance.

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Introduction

For the man and his career are as unaffectedly charming as his style, and more of a piece than his elaborate works of fiction. A sunny Provençal childhood is clouded by family misfortunes; then comes a year of wretched slavery as usher in a provincial school; then the inevitable journey to Paris with a brain full of verses and dreams, and the beginning of a life of Bohemian nonchalance, to which we Anglo-Saxons have little that is comparable outside the career of Oliver Goldsmith. But poor Goldsmith had his pride wounded by the editorial tyranny of a Mrs. Griffiths. Daudet, by a merely pretty poem about a youth and maiden making love under a plum-tree, won the protection of the Empress Eugénie, and through her of the Duke de Morny, the prop of the Second Empire. His life now reads like a fairy-tale inserted by some jocular elf into that book of dolors entitled *The Lives of Men of Genius*. A *protégé* of a potentate not usually lavish of his favours, and a valetudinarian, he is allowed to flit to Algiers and Corsica, to enjoy his beloved Provence in company with Mistral, to write for the theatres, and to continue to play the Bohemian. Then the death of Morny seems to turn the idyl into a tragedy, but only for a moment. Daudet's delicate, nervous beauty made his friend Zola think of an Arabian horse, but the poet had also the spirit of such a high-bred steed. Years of conscientious literary labour followed, cheered by marriage with a woman of genius capable of supplementing him in his weakest points, and then the war with Prussia and its attendant horrors gave him the larger and deeper view of life and the intensified patriotism — in short, the final stimulus he needed. From the date of his first great success—*Fromont, Jr., and Risler, Sr.*—glory and wealth

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flowed in upon him, while envy scarcely touched him, so unspoiled was he and so continuously and eminently lovable. One seemed to see in his career a reflection of his luminous nature, a revised myth of the golden touch, a new version of the fairy-tale of the fair mouth dropping pearls. Then, as though grown weary of the idyllic romance she was composing, Fortune donned the tragic robes of Nemesis. Years of pain followed, which could not abate the spirits or disturb the geniality of the sufferer, but did somewhat abate the power and disturb the serenity of his work. Then came the inevitable end of all life dramas, whether comic or romantic or tragic, and friends who had known him stood round his grave and listened sadly to the touching words in which Émile Zola expressed not merely his own grief but that of many thousands throughout the civilized world. Here was a life more winsome, more appealing, more complete than any creation of the genius of the man that lived it—a life which, whether we know it in detail or not, explains in part the fascination Daudet exerts upon us and the conviction we cherish that, whatever ravages time may make among his books, the memory of their writer will not fade from the hearts of men. Many Frenchmen have conquered the world's mind by the power or the subtlety of their genius; few have won its heart through the catholicity, the broad sympathy of their genius. Daudet is one of these few; indeed, he is almost if not quite the only European writer who has of late achieved such a triumph, for Tolstoi has stern critics as well as steadfast devotees, and has won most of his disciples as moralist and reformer. But we must turn from Daudet the man to Daudet the author of *The Nabob* and other memorable novels.

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Introduction

If this were a general essay and not an introduction, it would be proper to say something of Daudet's early attempts as poet and dramatist. Here it need only be remarked that it is almost a commonplace to insist that even in his later novels he never entirely ceased to see the outer world with the eyes of a poet, to delight in colour and movement, to seize every opportunity to indulge in vivid description couched in a style more swift and brilliant than normal prose aspires to. This bent for description, together with the tendency to episodic rather than sustained composition and the comparative weakness of his character drawing—features of his work shortly to be discussed—partly explains his failure, save in one or two instances, to score a real triumph with his plays, but does not explain his singular lack of sympathy with actors. Nor was he able to win great success with his first book of importance, *Le Petit Chose*, delightful as that mixture of autobiography and romance must prove to any sympathetic reader. He was essentially a romanticist and a poet cast upon an age of naturalism and prose, and he needed years of training and such experience as the Prussian invasion gave him to adjust himself to his life-work. Such adjustment was not needed for *Tartarin de Tarascon*, begun shortly after *Le Petit Chose*, because subtle humour of the kind lavished in that inimitable creation and in its sequels, while implying observation, does not necessarily imply any marked departure from the romantic and poetic points of view.

The training Daudet required for his novels he got from the sketches and short stories that occupied him during the late sixties and early seventies. Here again little in the way of comment need be given, and that little can but express the general verdict that the art

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displayed in these miniature productions is not far short of perfect. The two principal collections, *Lettres de mon Moulin* and *Contes du Lundi*, together with *Artists' Wives* (*Les Femmes d'Artistes*) and parts at least of *Robert Helmont*, would almost of themselves suffice to put Daudet high in the ranks of the writers who charm without leaving upon one's mind the slightest suspicion that they are weak. It is true that Daudet's stories do not attain the tremendous impressiveness that Balzac's occasionally do, as, for example, in *La Grande Bretêche*, nor has his clear-cut art the almost disconcerting firmness, the surgeon-like quality of Maupassant's; but the author of the ironical *Elixir of Father Gaucher* and of the pathetic *Last Class*, to name no others, could certainly claim with Musset that his glass was his own, and had no reason to concede its smallness.

As we have seen, the production of *Fromont jeune et Risler aîné* marked the beginning of Daudet's more than twenty years of successful novel-writing. His first elaborate study of Parisian life, while it indicated no advance of the art of fiction, deserved its popularity because, in spite of the many criticisms to which it was open, it was a thoroughly readable and often a moving book. One character, Delobelle, the played-out actor who is still a hero to his pathetic wife and daughter, was constructed on effective lines—was a personage worthy of Dickens. The vile heroine, Sidonie, was bad enough to excite disgusted interest, but, as Mr. Henry James pointed out later, she was not effective to the extent her creator doubtless hoped. She paled beside Valérie Marneffe, though, to be sure, Daudet knew better than to attempt to depict any such queen of vice. Yet, after all, it is mainly the compelling

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power of vile heroines that makes them tolerable, and neither Sidonie nor the web of intrigue she wove can fairly be said to be characterized by extraordinary strength. But the public was and is interested greatly by the novel, and Daudet deserved the fame and money it brought him. His next book, *Jack*, was not so popular. Still, it showed artistic improvement, although, as in its predecessor, that bias towards the sentimental, which was to be Daudet's besetting weakness, was too plainly visible. Its author took to his heart a book which the general reader found too long and perhaps overpathetic. Some of us, while recognising its faults, will share in part Daudet's predilection for it—not so much because of the strong and early study made of the artisan class, or of the mordantly satirical exposure of D'Argenton and his literary "dead-beats" (*ratés*), or of any other of the special features of a story that is crowded with them, as because the ill-fated hero, the product of genuine emotions on Daudet's part, excites cognate and equally genuine emotions in us. We cannot watch the throbbing engines of a great steamship without seeing Jack at work among them. But the fine, pathetic *Jack* brings us to the finer, more pathetic *Nabob*.

Whether *The Nabob* is Daudet's greatest novel is a question that may be postponed, but it may be safely asserted that there are good reasons why it should have been chosen to represent Daudet in the present series. It has been immensely popular, and thus does not illustrate merely the taste of an inner circle of its author's admirers. It is not so subtle a study of character as *Numa Roumestan*, nor is it a drama the scene of which is set somewhat in a corner removed from the world's scrutiny

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and full comprehension, as is more or less the case with *Kings in Exile*. It is comparatively unamenable to the moral, or, if one will, the puritanical, objections so naturally brought against *Sapho*. It obviously represents Daudet's powers better than any novel written after his health was permanently wrecked, and as obviously represents fiction more adequately than either of the Tartarin masterpieces, which belong rather to the literature of humour. Besides, it is probably the most broadly effective of all Daudet's novels; it is fuller of striking scenes; and as a picture of life in the picturesque Second Empire it is of unique importance.

Perhaps to many readers this last reason will seem the best of all. However much we may moralize about its baseness and hollowness, whether with the Hugo of *Les Châtiments* we scorn and vituperate its charlatan head or pity him profoundly as we see him ill and helpless in Zola's *Débâcle*, most of us, if we are candid, will confess that the Second Empire, especially the Paris of Morny and Hausmann, of cynicism and splendour, of frivolity and chicane, of servile obsequiousness and haughty pretension, the France and the Paris that drew to themselves the eyes of all Europe and particularly the eyes of the watchful Bismarck, have for us a fascination almost as great as they had for the gay and audacious men and women who in them courted fortune and chased pleasure from the morrow of the *Coup d'État* to the eve of Sédan. A nearly equal fascination is exerted upon us by a book which is the best sort of historical novel, since it is the product of its author's observation, not of his reading—a story that sets vividly before us the political corruption, the financial recklessness, the social turmoil, the public ostentation, the private squalor, that

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led to the downfall of an empire and almost to that of a people.

Daudet drew on his experiences, and on the notes he was always accumulating, more strenuously than he should have done. He assures us that he laboured over *The Nabob* for eight months, mainly in his bed-room, sometimes working eighteen consecutive hours, often waking from restless sleep with a sentence on his lips. Yet, such is the irony of literary history, the novel is loosely enough put together to have been written, one might suppose, in bursts of inspiration or else more or less methodically—almost with the intention, as Mr. James has noted, of including every striking phase of Parisian life. For it is a series of brilliant, effective episodes and scenes, not a closely knit drama. Jenkins's visit to Monpavon at his toilet, the *déjeuner* at the Nabob's, the inspection of the Œuvre de Bethléem—which would have delighted Dickens—the collapse of the fêtes of the Bey, the Nabob's thrashing Moëssard, the death of Mora, Félicia's attempt to escape the funeral of the duke, the interview between the Nabob and Hemerlingue, the baiting in the Chamber, the suicide of that supreme man of tone, Monpavon, the Nabob's apoplectic seizure in the theatre—these and many other scenes and episodes, together with descriptions and touches, stand out in our memories more distinctly and impressively than the characters do —perhaps more so than does the central motive, the outrageous exploitation of the naïve hero. For from the beginning of his career to the end Daudet's eye, like that of a genuine but not supereminent poet, was chiefly attracted by colour, movement, effective pose—in other words, by the surfaces of things. One may almost say

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that he was more of a landscape engineer than of an architect and builder, although one must at once add that he could and did erect solid structures. But the reader at least helps greatly to lay the foundations, for, to drop the metaphor, Daudet relied largely on suggestion, contenting himself with the belief that a capable imagination could fill up the gaps he left in plot and character analysis. Thus, for example, he indicated and suggested rather than detailed the way in which Hemerlingue finally triumphed over the Nabob, Jansoulet. To use another figure, he drew the spider, the fly, and a few strands of the web. The Balzac whose bust looked satirically down upon the two adventurers in Père la Chaise would probably have given us the whole web. This is not quite to say that Daudet is plausible, Balzac inevitable; but rather that we stroll with the former master and follow submissively in the footsteps of the latter. Yet a caveat is needed, for the intense interest we take in the characters of a novel like *The Nabob* scarcely suggests strolling.

For although Daudet, in spite of his abounding sympathy, which is one reason of his great attractiveness, cannot fairly be said to be a great character creator, he had sufficient flexibility and force of genius to set in action interesting personages. Part of the early success of *The Nabob* was due to this fact, although the brilliant description of the Second Empire and the introduction of exotic elements, the Tunisian and Corsican episodes and characters, counted, probably, for not a little. Readers insisted upon seeing in the book this person and that more or less thinly disguised. The Irish adventurer-physician, Jenkins, was supposed to be modelled upon a popular Dr. Olliffe; the arsenic pills were derived

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from another source, as was also the goat's-milk hospital for infants. Félicia Ruys was thought by some to be Sarah Bernhardt, and originals were easily provided for Monpavon and the other leading figures. But Daudet confessed to only two important originals, and if one does not take an author's word in such matters one soon finds one's self in a maze of conjectures and contradictions.

The two characters drawn from life in a special sense —for Daudet, like most other writers of fiction, had human life in general constantly before him—are Jansoulet and Mora, precisely the most effective personages in the book, and scarcely surpassed in the whole range of Daudet's fiction. The Nabob was François Bravay, who rose from poverty to wealth by devious transactions in the Orient, and came to grief in Paris, much as Jansoulet did. He survived the Empire, and his relatives are said to have been incensed at the treatment given him in the novel, an attitude on their part which is explicable but scarcely justifiable, since Daudet's sympathy for his hero could not well have been greater, and since the adventurer had already attained a notoriety that was not likely to be completely forgotten. Whether Daudet was as much at liberty to make free with the character of his benefactor Morny is another matter. He himself thought that he was, and he was a man of delicate sensitiveness. Probably he was right in claiming that the natural son of Queen Hortense, the intrepid soldier, the author of the *Coup d'État* that set his weaker half-brother on the throne, the dandy, the libertine, the leader of fashion, the cynical statesman—in short, the "Richelieu-Brummel" who drew the eyes of all Europe upon himself, would not have been in the least discon-

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certed could he have known that thirteen years after his death the public would be discussing him as the prototype of the Mora of his young *protégé's* masterpiece. In fact, it is easy to agree with those critics who think that Daudet's kindly nature caused him to soften many features of Morny's unlovely character. Mora does not, indeed, win our love or our esteem, but we confess him to have been in every respect an exceptional man, and there is not a page in which he appears that is not intensely interesting. He must be an unimpressionable reader who soon forgets the death-room scenes, the destruction of the compromising letters, the spectacular funeral.

Of the other characters there is little space to speak here. Nearly all have their good points, as might be expected of the creator of his two fellow Provençals, Numa and Tartarin, the latter being probably the only really cosmopolitan figure in recent literature; but some, like the Hemerlingues, verge upon mere sketches; others, like Jansoulet's obese wife, upon caricatures. The old mother is excellently done, however, and Monpavon, especially in his suicide, is nothing short of a triumph of art. It is the more or less romantic or sentimental personages that give the critic most qualms. Daudet seems to have introduced them—De Géry, the Joyeuse family, and the rest—as a concession to popular taste, and on this score was probably justified. A fair case may also be made out for the use of idyllic scenes as a foil to the tragical, for the Shakespearian critics have no monopoly of the overworked plea, "justification by contrast." Nor could a French analogue of Dickens easily resist the temptation to give us a fatuous Passajon, an ebullient Père Joyeuse—who seems to have been

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partly modelled on a real person—an exemplary "Bonne Maman," a struggling but eventually triumphant André Maranne. The home-lover Daudet also felt the necessity of showing that Paris could set the Joyeuse household, sunny in its poverty, over against the stately elegance of the Mora palace, the walls of which listened at one and the same moment to the music of a ball and the death-rattle of its haughty owner. But when all is said, it remains clear that *The Nabob* is open to the charge that applies to all the greater novels save *Sapho*—the charge that it exhibits a somewhat inharmonious mixture of sentimentalism and naturalism. Against this charge, which perhaps applies most forcibly to that otherwise almost perfect work of art, *Numa Roumestan*, Daudet defended himself, but rather weakly. Nor does Mr. Henry James, who in the case of the last-named novel comes to his help against Zola, much mend matters. But the fault, if fault it be, is venial, especially in a friend, though not strictly a coworker, of Zola's.

Naturally an elaborate novel like *The Nabob* lends itself indefinitely to minute comment, but we must be sparing of it. Still it is worth while to call attention to the skill with which, from the opening page, the interest of the reader is controlled; indeed, to the remarkable art displayed in the whole first chapter devoted to the morning rounds of Dr. Jenkins. The note of romantic extravagance is on the whole avoided until the Nabob brings out his check-book, when the money flies with a speed for which, one fancies, Daudet could have found little justification this side of Timon of Athens. In the description of the *Caisse Territoriale* given by Passajon this note is relieved by a delicate irony, but seems still somewhat incongruous. One turns more willingly

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to the description of Jansoulet's sitting down to play *écarté* with Mora, to the story of how he gorged himself with the duke's putative mushrooms, and to similar episodes and touches. In the matter of effective and ironically turned situations few novels can compare with this; indeed, it almost seems as if Daudet made an inordinate use of them. Think of the poor Nabob reading the announcement of the cross bestowed on Jenkins, and of the absurd populace mistaking him for the ungrateful Bey! As for great dramatic moments, there is at least one that no reader can forget—the moment when Jansoulet, in the midst of the speech on which his fate depends, catches sight of his old mother's face and forbears to clear himself of calumny at the expense of his wretched elder brother. The situation may not bear close analysis, but who wishes to analyze? Or who, indeed, wishes to indulge in further comment after the scene has risen to his mind?

The Nabob was followed by *Kings in Exile*; then came *Numa Roumestan* and *The Evangelist*; then, on the eve of Daudet's breakdown, *Sapho*; and the greatest of his humorous masterpieces, *Tartarin in the Alps*. It is not yet certain what rank is to be given to these books. Perhaps the adventures of the mountain-climbing hero of the Midi, combined with his previous exploits as a slayer of lions—his experiences as a colonist in *Port-Tarascon* need scarcely be considered—will prove, in the lapse of years, to be the most solid foundation of that fame which even envious Time will hardly begrudge Daudet. As for *Kings in Exile*, it is difficult to see how even the art with which the tragedy of Queen Frédérique's life is unfolded or the growing power of characterization displayed in her, in the loyal Mérault, in the

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facile; decadent Christian, can make up for the lack of broadly human appeal in the general subject-matter of a book which was so sympathetically written as to appeal alike to Legitimists and to Republicans. Good as *Kings in Exile* is, it is not so effective a book as *The Nabob*; nor such a unique and marvellous work of art as *Numa Roumestan*, due allowance being made for the intrusion of sentimentality into the latter. Daudet thought *Numa* the "least incomplete" of his works; it is certainly inclusive enough, since some critics are struck by the tragic relations subsisting between the virtuous, discreet Northern wife and the peccable, expansive Southern husband, while others see in the latter the hero of a comedy of manners almost worthy of Molière. If *Numa* represents the highest achievement of Daudet in dramatic fiction or else in the art of characterization, *The Evangelist* proved that his genius was not at home in those fields. Instead of marking an ordered advance, this overwrought study of Protestant bigotry marked not so much a halt, or a retreat, as a violent swerving to one side. Yet in a way this swerving into the devious orbit of the novel of intense purpose helped Daudet in his progress towards naturalism, and imparted something of stability to his methods of work. *Sapho*, which appeared next, was the first of his novels that left little to be desired in the way of artistic unity and cumulative power. If such a study of the *femme collante*, the mistress who cannot be shaken off—or rather of the man whom she ruins, for it is Gaussin, not Sapho, that is the main subject of Daudet's acute analysis—was to be written at all, it had to be written with a resolute art such as Daudet applied to it. It is not then surprising that Continental critics rank *Sapho* as its author's great-

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est production; it is more in order to wonder what Daudet might not have done in this line of work had his health remained unimpaired. The later novels, in which he came near to joining forces with the naturalists and hence to losing some of the vogue his eclecticism gave him, need not detain us.

And now, in conclusion, how can we best characterize briefly this fascinating, versatile genius, the most delightful humorist of his time, one of the most artistic story-tellers, one of the greatest novelists? It is impossible to classify him, for he was more than a humorist, he nearly outgrew romance, he never accepted unreservedly the canons of naturalism. He obviously does not belong to the small class of the supreme writers of fiction, for he has no consistent or at least profound philosophy of life. He is a true poet, yet for the main he has expressed himself not in verse, but in prose, and in a form of prose that is being so extensively cultivated that its permanence is daily brought more and more into question. What is Daudet, and what will he be to posterity? Some admirers have already answered the first question, perhaps as satisfactorily as it can be answered, by saying, "Daudet is simply Daudet." As for the second question, a whole school of critics is inclined to answer it and all similar queries with the curt statement, "That concerns posterity, not us." If, however, less evasive answers are insisted upon, let the following utterance, which might conceivably be more indefinite and oracular, suffice: Alphonse Daudet is one of those rare writers who combine greatness with a charm so intimate and appealing that some of us would not, if we could, have their greatness increased.

W. P. TRENT.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

ALPHONSE DAUDET *was born at Nîmes on the 13th of May, 1840. He was the younger son of a rich and enthusiastically Royalist silk-manufacturer of that town, the novelist, Ernest Daudet (born 1837), being his elder brother. In their childhood, the father, Vincent Daudet, suffered reverses, and had to settle with his family, in reduced circumstances, at Lyons. Alphonse, in 1856, obtained a post as usher in a school at Alais, in the Gard, where he was extremely unhappy. All these painful early experiences are told very pathetically in "Le Petit Chose." On the 1st of November, 1857, Alphonse fled from the horrors of his life at Alais, and joined his brother Ernest, who had just secured a post in the service of the Duc de Morny in Paris. Alphonse determined to live by his pen, and presently obtained introductions to the "Figaro." His early volumes of verse, "Les Amoureuses" of 1858 and "La Double Conversion" of 1861, attracted some favourable notice. In this latter year his difficulties ceased, for he had the good fortune to become one of the secretaries of the Duc de Morny, a post which he held for four years, until the popularity of his writings rendered him independent. To the generosity of his patron, moreover, he owed the opportunity of visiting Italy and the East. His first novel, "Le Cha-*

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peron Rouge," 1863, was not very remarkable, and Daudet turned to the stage. His principal dramatic efforts of this period were "Le Dernier Idole," 1862, and "L'Œillet Blanc," 1865. Alphonse Daudet's earliest important work, however, was "Le Petit Chose," 1868, a very pathetic autobiography of the first eighteen years of his life, over which he cast a thin veil of romance. After the death of the Duc de Morny, Daudet retired to Provence, leasing a ruined mill at Fortvielle, in the valley of the Rhone; from this romantic solitude, among the pines and green oaks, he sent forth those exquisite studies of Provençal life, the "Lettres de mon Moulin." After the war, Daudet reappeared in Paris, greatly strengthened and ripened by his hermit-existence in the heart of Provence. He produced one masterpiece after another. He had studied with laughter and joy the mirthful side of southern exaggeration, and he created a figure in which its peculiar qualities should be displayed, as it were, in excelsis. This study resulted, in 1872, in "The Prodigious Feats of Tartarin of Tarascon," one of the most purely delightful works of humour in the French language. Alphonse Daudet now, armed with his cahiers, his little green-backed books of notes, set out to be a great historian of French manners in the second half of the nineteenth century. His first important novel, "Fromont Jeune et Risler Aîné," 1874, enjoyed a notable success; it was followed in 1876 by "Jack," in 1878 by "Le Nabab," in 1879 by "Les Rois en Exil," in 1881 by "Numa Roumestan," in 1883 by "L'Evangéliste," and in 1884 by "Sapho." These are the seven great romances of modern French life on which the reputation of Alphonse Daudet as a novelist is mainly built. They placed him, for the moment at all

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events, near the head of contemporary European literature. By this time, however, a physical malady, which Charcot was the first to locate in the spinal cord, had begun to exhaust the novelist's powers. This disease, which took the form of what was supposed to be neuralgia in 1881, racked him with pain during the sixteen remaining years of his life, and gradually destroyed his powers of locomotion. It spared the functions of the brain, but it cannot be denied that after 1884 something of force and spontaneous charm was lacking in Daudet's books. He continued, however, the adventures of Tartarin, first with unabated gusto in the Alps, then less happily as a colonist in the South Seas. He wrote, in the form of a novel, a bitter satire on the French Academy, of which he was never a member; this was "L'Immortel" of 1888. He wrote romances, of little power, the best being "Rose et Ninette" of 1892, but his imaginative work steadily declined in value. He published in 1887 his reminiscences, "Trente Ans de Paris," and later on his "Souvenirs d'un Homme de Lettres." He suffered more and more from his complaint, from the insomnia it caused, and from the abuse of chloral. He was able, however, to the last, to enjoy the summer at his country-house, at Champrosay, and even to travel in an invalid's chair; in 1896 he visited for the first time London and Oxford, and saw Mr. George Meredith. In Paris he had long occupied rooms in the Rue de Bellechasse, where Madame Alphonse Daudet was accustomed to entertain a brilliant company. But in 1897 it became impossible for him to mount five flights of stairs any longer, and he moved to the first floor of No. 41 Rue de l'Université. Here, on the 16th of December, 1897, as he was chatting

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gaily at the dinner-table, he uttered a cry, fell back in his chair, and was dead. The personal appearance of Alphonse Daudet, in his prime, was very striking; he had clearly cut features, large brilliant eyes, and an amazing exuberance of curled hair and forked beard.

E. G.

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Octave Uzanne

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THE NABOB

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THE NABOB

I

DOCTOR JENKINS'S PATIENTS

STANDING on the steps of his little town-house in the Rue de Lisbonne, freshly shaven, with sparkling eyes, and lips parted in easy enjoyment, his long hair slightly gray flowing over a huge coat collar, square shouldered, strong as an oak, the famous Irish doctor, Robert Jenkins, Knight of the Medjidjieh and of the distinguished order of Charles III of Spain, President and Founder of the Bethlehem Society. Jenkins in a word, the Jenkins of the Jenkins Pills with an arsenical base—that is to say, the fashionable doctor of the year 1864, the busiest man in Paris, was preparing to step into his carriage when a casement opened on the first floor looking over the inner court-yard of the house, and a woman's voice asked timidly:

"Shall you be home for luncheon, Robert?"

Oh, how good and loyal was the smile that suddenly illumined the fine apostle-like head with its air of learning, and in the tender "good-morning" which his eyes threw up towards the warm, white dressing-gown visible behind the raised curtains; how easy it was to divine one of those conjugal passions, tranquil and sure, which habit re-enforces and with supple and stable bonds binds closer.

"No, Mrs. Jenkins." He was fond of thus bestowing upon her publicly her title as his lawful wife, as if he found in it an intimate gratification, a sort of acquittal of conscience towards the woman who made life so bright for him. "No, do not expect me this morning. I lunch in the Place Vendôme."

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"Ah! yes, the Nabob," said the handsome Mrs. Jenkins with a very marked note of respect for this personage out of the *Thousand and One Nights* of whom all Paris had been talking for the last month; then, after a little hesitation, very tenderly, in a quite low voice, from between the heavy tapestries, she whispered for the ears of the doctor only:

"Be sure you do not forget what you promised me."

Apparently it was something very difficult to fulfil, for at the reminder of this promise the eyebrows of the apostle contracted into a frown, his smile became petrified, his whole visage assumed an expression of incredible hardness; but it was only for an instant. At the bedside of their rich patients the physiognomies of these fashionable doctors become expert in lying. In his most tender, most cordial manner, he replied, disclosing a row of dazzling white teeth:

"What I promised shall be done, Mrs. Jenkins. And now, go in quickly and shut your window. The fog is cold this morning."

Yes, the fog was cold, but white as snow mist; and, filling the air outside the glasses of the large brougham, it brightened with soft gleams the unfolded newspaper in the doctor's hands. Over yonder, in the populous quarters, confined and gloomy, in the Paris of tradesman and mechanic, that charming morning haze which lingers in the great thoroughfares is not known. The bustle of awakening, the going and coming of the market-carts, of the omnibuses, of the heavy trucks rattling their old iron, have early and quickly cut it up, unravelled and scattered it. Every passer-by carries away a little of it in a threadbare overcoat, a muffler which shows the woof, and coarse gloves rubbed one against the other. It soaks through the thin blouses, and the mackintoshes thrown over the working skirts; it melts away at every breath that is drawn, warm from sleeplessness or alcohol; it is engulfed in the depths of empty stomachs, dispersed in the shops as they are opened, and the dark courts, or along staircases of which it bathes the rails and walls, even to the fireless attics. That is the reason why there remains so little of it out of doors. But in that spa-

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cious and grandiose region of Paris, which was inhabited by Jenkins's clients, on those wide boulevards planted with trees, and those deserted quays, the fog hovered without a stain, like so many sheets, with waverings and cotton wool-like flakes. The effect was of a place inclosed, secret, almost sumptuous, as the sun after his slothful rising began to diffuse softly crimsoned tints, which gave to the mist enshrouding the rows of houses to their summits the appearance of white muslin thrown over some scarlet material. One might have fancied it a great curtain sheltering the late and light sleep of wealth, the heavy curtain beneath which nothing could be heard save the cautious closing of some court-yard gate, the tin measuring-cans of the milkmen, the little bells of a herd of she-asses passing at a quick trot followed by the short and panting breath of their shepherd, and the dull rumble of Jenkins's brougham commencing its daily round.

First, to Mora House. This was a magnificent palace on the Quai d'Orsay, next door to the Spanish embassy, whose long terraces succeeded its own, having its principal entrance in the Rue de Lille, and a door upon the side next the river. Between two lofty walls overgrown with ivy, and united by imposing vaulted arches, the brougham shot in, announced by two strokes of a sonorous bell which roused Jenkins from the reverie into which the reading of his newspaper seemed to have plunged him. Then the noise of the wheels became deadened on the sand of a vast court-yard, and they drew up, after describing an elegant curve, before the steps of the mansion, which were surrounded by a large circular awning. In the obscurity of the fog, a dozen carriages could be seen ranged in line, and along an avenue of acacias, quite withered at that season and leafless in their bark, the profiles of English grooms leading out the saddle-horses of the duke for their exercise. Everything revealed a luxury thought-out, settled, grandiose, and assured.

"It is quite useless for me to come early; others always arrive before me," said Jenkins to himself as he saw the file in which his brougham took its place; but, certain of

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not having to wait, with head carried high, and an air of tranquil authority, he ascended that official flight of steps which is mounted every day by so many trembling ambitions, so many anxieties on hesitating feet.

From the very antechamber, lofty and resonant like a church, which, although calorifers burned night and day, possessed two great wood-fires that filled it with a radiant life, the luxury of this interior reached you by warm and heady puffs. It suggested at once a hot-house and a Turkish bath. A great deal of heat and yet brightness; white wainscoting, white marbles, immense windows, nothing stifling or shut in, and yet a uniform atmosphere meet for the surrounding of some rare existence, refined and nervous. Jenkins always expanded in this factitious sun of wealth; he greeted with a "good-morning, my lads," the powdered porter, with his wide golden scarf, the footmen in knee-breeches and livery of gold and blue, all standing to do him honour; lightly drew his finger across the bars of the large cage of monkeys full of sharp cries and capers, and, whistling under his breath, stepped quickly up the staircase of shining marble laid with a carpet as thick as the turf of a lawn, which led to the apartments of the duke. Although six months had passed since his first visit to Mora House, the good doctor was not yet become insensible to the quite physical impression of gaiety, of frivolity, which he received from this dwelling.

Although you were in the abode of the first official of the Empire there was nothing here suggestive of the work of government or its boxes of dusty old papers. The duke had only consented to accept his high dignitaries as Minister of State and President of the Council upon the condition that he should not quit his private mansion; he only went to his office for an hour or two daily, the time necessary to give the indispensable signatures, and held his receptions in his bed-chamber. At this moment, notwithstanding the earliness of the hour, the hall was crowded. You saw there grave, anxious faces, provincial prefects with shaven lips, and administrative whiskers, slightly less arrogant in this antechamber than yonder in their prefectures,

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magistrates of austere air, sober in gesture, deputies important of manner, big-wigs of the financial world, rich and boorish manufacturers, among whom stood out here and there the slender, ambitious figure of some substitute of a prefectorial councillor, in the garb of one seeking a favour, dress-coat and white tie; and all, standing, sitting, in groups or solitary, sought silently to penetrate with their gaze that high door closed upon their destiny, by which they would issue forth directly triumphant or with cast-down head. Jenkins passed through the crowd rapidly, and every one followed with an envious eye this newcomer whom the doorkeeper, with his official chain, correct and icy in his demeanour, seated at a table beside the door, greeted with a little smile at once respectful and familiar.

"Who is with him?" asked the doctor, indicating the chamber of the duke.

Hardly moving his lips, and not without a slightly ironical glance of the eye, the doorkeeper whispered a name which, if they had heard it, would have roused the indignation of all these high personages who had been waiting for an hour past until the costumier of the opera should have ended his audience.

A sound of voices, a ray of light. Jenkins had just entered the duke's presence; he never waited, he.

Standing with his back to the fireplace, closely wrapped in a dressing-jacket of blue fur, the soft reflections from which gave an air of refinement to an energetic and haughty head, the President of the Council was causing to be designed under his eyes a Pierrette costume for the duchess to wear at her next ball, and was giving his directions with the same gravity with which he would have dictated the draft of a new law.

"Let the frill be very fine on the ruff, and put no frills on the sleeves.—Good-morning, Jenkins. I am with you directly."

Jenkins bowed, and took a few steps in the immense room, of which the windows, opening on a garden that extended as far as the Seine, framed one of the finest views of Paris, the bridges, the Tuileries, the Louvre, in a net-

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work of black trees traced as it were in Indian ink upon the floating background of fog. A large and very low bed, raised by a few steps above the floor, two or three little lacquer screens with vague and capricious gilding, indicating, like the double doors and the carpets of thick wool, a fear of cold pushed even to excess, various seats, lounges, warmers, scattered about rather indiscriminately, all low, rounded, indolent, or voluptuous in shape, composed the furniture of this celebrated chamber in which the gravest questions and the most frivolous were wont to be treated alike with the same seriousness. On the wall was a handsome portrait of the duchess; on the chimneypiece a bust of the duke, the work of Félicia Ruys, which at the recent Salon had received the honours of a first medal.

"Well, Jenkins, how are we this morning?" said his excellency, approaching, while the costumier was picking up his fashion-plates, scattered over all the easy chairs.

"And you, my dear duke? I thought you a little pale last evening at the Variétés."

"Come, come! I have never felt so well. Your pills have a most marvellous effect upon me. I am conscious of a vivacity, a freshness, when I remember how run down I was six months ago."

Jenkins, without saying anything, had laid his great head against the fur-coat of the minister of state, at the place where, in common men, the heart beats. He listened a moment while his excellency continued to speak in the indolent, bored tone which was one of the characteristics of his distinction.

"And who was your companion, doctor, last night? That huge, bronzed Tartar who was laughing so loudly in the front of your box."

"It was the Nabob, *Monsieur le Duc*. The famous Jansoulet, about whom people are talking so much just now."

"I ought to have guessed it. The whole house was watching him. The actresses played for him alone. You know him? What sort of man is he?"

"I know him. That is to say, I attend him professionally.—Thank you, my dear duke, I have finished. All is

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right in that region.—When he arrived in Paris a month ago, he had found the change of climate somewhat trying. He sent for me, and since then has received me upon the most friendly footing. What I know of him is that he possesses a colossal fortune, made in Tunis, in the service of the Bey, that he has a loyal heart, a generous soul, in which the ideas of humanity——"

"In Tunis?" interrupted the duke, who was by nature very little sentimental and humanitarian. "In that case, why this name of Nabob?"

"Bah! the Parisians do not look at things so closely. For them, every rich foreigner is a nabob, no matter whence he comes. Furthermore, this nabob has all the physical qualities for the part—a copper-coloured skin, eyes like burning coals, and, what is more, gigantic wealth, of which he makes, I do not fear to say it, the most noble and the most intelligent use. It is to him that I owe"—here the doctor assumed a modest air—"that I owe it that I have at last been able to found the Bethlehem Society for the suckling of infants, which a morning paper, that I was looking over just now—the *Messenger*, I think—calls 'the great philanthropic idea of the century.'"

The duke threw a listless glance over the sheet which Jenkins held out to him. He was not the man to be caught by the turn of an advertisement.

"He must be very rich, this M. Jansoulet," said he, coldly. "He finances Cardailhac's theatre; Monpavon gets him to pay his debts; Bois l'Héry starts a stable for him; old Schwalbach a picture gallery. It means money, all that."

Jenkins laughed.

"What will you have, my dear duke, this poor Nabob, you are his great preoccupation. Arriving here with the firm resolution to become a Parisian, a man of the world, he has taken you for his model in everything, and I do not conceal from you that he would very much like to study his model from a nearer standpoint."

"I know, I know. Monpavon has already asked my permission to bring him to see me. But I prefer to wait;

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I wish to see. With these great fortunes that come from so far away one has to be careful. *Mon Dieu!* I do not say that if I should meet him elsewhere than in my own house, at the theatre, in a drawing-room——"

"As it just happens, Mrs. Jenkins is proposing to give a small party next month. If you would do us the honour——"

"I shall be glad to come, my dear doctor, and if your Nabob should chance to be there I should make no objection to his being presented to me."

At this moment the usher on duty opened the door.

"Monsieur the Minister of the Interior is in the blue salon. He has only one word to say to his excellency. Monsieur the Prefect of Police is still waiting downstairs, in the gallery."

"Very well," said the duke, "I am coming. But I should like first to finish the matter of this costume. Let us see—friend, what's your name—what are we deciding upon for these ruffs? Au revoir, doctor. There is nothing to be done, is there, except to continue the pills?"

"Continue the pills," said Jenkins, bowing; and he left the room beaming with delight at the two pieces of good fortune which were befalling him at the same time—the honour of entertaining the duke and the pleasure of obliging his dear Nabob. In the antechamber, the crowd of petitioners through which he passed was still more numerous than at his entry; newcomers had joined those who had been patiently waiting from the first, others were mounting the staircase, with busy look and very pale, and in the courtyard the carriages continued to arrive, and to range themselves on ranks in a circle, gravely, solemnly, while the question of the sleeve ruffs was being discussed upstairs with not less solemnity.

"To the club," said Jenkins to his coachman.

The brougham bowled along the quays, recrossed the bridges, reached the Place de la Concorde, which already no longer wore the same aspect as an hour earlier. The fog was lifting in the direction of the Garde-Meuble and the Greek temple of the Madeleine, allowing to be dimly dis-

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tinguished here and there the white plume of a jet of water, the arcade of a palace, the upper portion of a statue, the tree-clumps of the Tuileries, grouped in chilly fashion near the gates. The veil, not raised, but broken in places, disclosed fragments of horizon; and on the avenue which leads to the Arc de Triomphe could be seen brakes passing at full trot laden with coachmen and jobmasters, dragoons of the Empress, fuglemen bedizened with lace and covered with furs, going two by two in long files with a jangling of bits and spurs, and the snorting of fresh horses, the whole lighted by a sun still invisible, the light issuing from the misty atmosphere, and here and there withdrawing into it again as if offering a fleeting vision of the morning luxury of that quarter of the town.

Jenkins alighted at the corner of the Rue Royale. From top to bottom of the great gambling house the servants were passing to and fro, shaking the carpets, airing the rooms where the fume of cigars still hung about and heaps of fine glowing ashes were crumbling away at the back of the hearths, while on the green tables, still vibrant with the night's play, there stood burning a few silver candlesticks whose flames rose straight in the wan light of day. The noise, the coming and going, ceased at the third floor, where sundry members of the club had their apartments. Among these was the Marquis de Monpavon, whose abode Jenkins was now on his way to visit.

"What! It is you, doctor? The devil take it! What is the time then? I'm not visible."

"Not even for the doctor?"

"Oh, for nobody. Question of etiquette, *mon cher*. No matter, come in all the same. You'll warm your feet for a moment while Francis finishes doing my hair."

Jenkins entered the bed-chamber, a banal place like all furnished apartments, and moved towards the fire on which there were set to heat curling-tongs of all sizes, while in the contiguous laboratory, separated from the room by a curtain of Algerian tapestry, the Marquis de Monpavon gave himself up to the manipulations of his valet. Odours of patchouli, of cold-cream, of hartshorn, and of singed hair

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escaped from the part of the room which was shut off, and from time to time, when Francis came to fetch a curling-iron, Jenkins caught sight of a huge dressing-table laden with a thousand little instruments of ivory, and mother-of-pearl, with steel files, scissors, puffs, and brushes, with bottles, with little trays, with cosmetics, labelled and arranged methodically in groups and lines; and amid all this display, awkward and already shaky, an old man's hand, shrunken and long, delicately trimmed and polished about the nails like that of a Japanese painter, which faltered about among this fine hardware and doll's china.

While continuing the process of making up his face, the longest, the most complicated of his morning occupations, Monpavon chatted with the doctor, told of his little ailments, and the good effect of the *pills*. They made him young again, he said. And at a distance, thus, without seeing him, one would have taken him for the Duc de Mora, to such a degree had he usurped his manner of speech. There were the same unfinished phrases, ended by "ps, ps, ps," muttered between the teeth, expressions like "What's its name?" "Who was it?" constantly thrown into what he was saying, a kind of aristocratic stutter, fatigued, listless, wherein you might perceive a profound contempt for the vulgar art of speech. In the society of which the duke was the centre, every one sought to imitate that accent, those disdainful intonations with an affectation of simplicity.

Jenkins, finding the sitting rather long, had risen to take his departure.

"Adieu, I must be off. We shall see you at the Nabob's?"

"Yes, I intend to be there for luncheon. Promised to bring him—what's his name. Who was it? What? You know, for our big affair—ps, ps, ps. Were it not for that, should gladly stay away. Real menagerie, that house."

The Irishman, despite his benevolence, agreed that the society was rather mixed at his friend's. But then! One could hardly blame him for it. The poor fellow, he knew no better.

"Neither knows nor is willing to learn," remarked Mon-

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pavon with bitterness. "Instead of consulting people of experience—ps, ps, ps—first sponger that comes along. Have you seen the horses that Bois l'Héry has persuaded him to buy? Absolute rubbish, those animals. And he paid twenty thousand francs for them. We may wager that Bois l'Héry got them for six thousand."

"Oh, for shame—a nobleman!" said Jenkins, with the indignation of a lofty soul refusing to believe in baseness.

Monpavon continued, without seeming to hear:

"All that because the horses came from Mora's stable."

"It is true that the dear Nabob's heart is very full of the duke. I am about to make him very happy, therefore, when I inform him——"

The doctor paused, embarrassed.

"When you inform him of what, Jenkins?"

Somewhat abashed, Jenkins had to confess that he had obtained permission from his excellency to present to him his friend Jansoulet. Scarcely had he finished his sentence before a tall spectre, with flabby face and hair and whiskers diversely coloured, bounded from the dressing-room into the chamber, with his two hands folding round a fleshless but very erect neck a dressing-gown of flimsy silk with violet spots, in which he was wrapped like a sweetmeat in its paper. The most striking thing about this mock-heroic physiognomy was a large curved nose all shiny with cold cream, and an eye alive, keen, too young, too bright, for the heavy and wrinkled eyelid which covered it. Jenkins's patients all had that eye.

Monpavon must indeed have been deeply moved to show himself thus devoid of all prestige. In point of fact, with white lips and a changed voice he addressed the doctor quickly, without lisp this time, and in a single outburst:

"Come now, *mon cher*, no tomfoolery between us, eh? We are both met before the same dish, but I leave you your share. I intend that you shall leave me mine."

And Jenkins's air of astonishment did not make him pause. "Let this be said once for all. I have promised the Nabob to present him to the duke, just as, formerly, I

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presented you. Do not mix yourself up, therefore, with what concerns me alone."

Jenkins laid his hand on his heart, protested his innocence. He had never had any intention. Certainly Monpavon was too intimate a friend of the duke, for any other—How could he have supposed?

"I suppose nothing," said the old nobleman, calmer but still cold. "I merely desired to have a very clear explanation with you on this subject."

The Irishman extended a widely opened hand.

"My dear marquis, explanations are always clear between men of honour."

"Honour is a big word, Jenkins. Let us say people of deportment—that suffices."

And that deportment, which he invoked as the supreme guide of conduct, recalling him suddenly to the sense of his ludicrous situation, the marquis offered one finger to his friend's demonstrative shake of the hand, and passed back with dignity behind his curtain, while the other left, in haste to resume his round.

What a magnificent clientele he had, this Jenkins! Nothing but princely mansions, heated staircases, laden with flowers at every landing, upholstered and silky alcoves, where disease was transformed into something discreet, elegant, where nothing suggested that brutal hand which throws on a bed of pain those who only cease to work in order to die. They were not in any true speech, sick people, these clients of the Irish doctor. They would have been refused admission to a hospital. Their organs not possessing even strength to give them a shock, the seat of their malady was to be discovered nowhere, and the doctor, as he bent over them, might have sought in vain the throb of any suffering in those bodies which the inertia, the silence of death already inhabited. They were worn-out, debilitated people, anæmics, exhausted by an absurd life, but who found it so good still that they fought to have it prolonged. And the Jenkins pills became famous precisely by reason of that lash of the whip which they gave to jaded existences.

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"Doctor, I beseech you, let me be fit to go to the ball this evening!" the young woman would say, prostrate on her lounge, and whose voice was reduced to a breath.

"You shall go, my dear child."

And she went; and never had she looked more beautiful.

"Doctor, at all costs, though it should kill me, to-morrow morning I must be at the Cabinet Council."

He was there, and carried away from it a triumph of eloquence and of ambitious diplomacy.

Afterward—oh, afterward, if you please! But no matter! To their last day Jenkins's clients went about, showed themselves, cheated the devouring egotism of the crowd. They died on their feet, as became men and women of the world.

After a thousand peregrinations in the Chaussée d'Antin and the Champs-Elysées, after having visited every millionaire or titled personage in the Faubourg Saint Honoré, the fashionable doctor arrived at the corner of the Cours-la-Reine and the Rue Francois I^er^, before a house with a rounded front, which occupied the angle on the quay, and entered an apartment on the ground floor which resembled in nowise those through which he had been passing since morning. From the threshold, tapestries covering the walls, windows of old stained glass with strips of lead cutting across a discrete and composite light, a gigantic saint in carved wood which fronted a Japanese monster with protruding eyes and a back covered with delicate scales like tiles, indicated the imaginative and curious taste of an artist. The little page who answered the door held in leash an Arab greyhound larger than himself.

"Mme. Constance is at mass," he said, "and Mademoiselle is in the studio quite alone. We have been at work since six o'clock this morning," added the child with a rueful yawn which the dog caught on the wing, making him open wide his pink mouth with its sharp teeth.

Jenkins, whom we have seen enter with so much self-possession the chamber of the Minister of State, trembled

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a little as he raised the curtain masking the door of the studio which had been left open. It was a splendid sculptor's studio, the front of which, on the street corner, semicircular in shape, gave the room one whole wall of glass, with pilasters at the sides, a large, well-lighted bay, opal-coloured just then by reason of the fog. More ornate than are usually such work-rooms, which the stains of the plaster, the boasting-tools, the clay, the puddles of water generally cause to resemble a stone-mason's shed, this one added a touch of coquetry to its artistic purpose. Green plants in every corner, a few good pictures suspended against the bare wall and, here and there, resting upon oak brackets, two or three works of Sébastien Ruys, of which the last, exhibited after his death, was covered with a piece of black gauze.

The mistress of the house, Félicia Ruys, the daughter of the famous sculptor and herself already known by two masterpieces, the bust of her father and that of the Duc de Mora, was standing in the middle of the studio, occupied in the modelling of a figure. Wearing a tightly fitting riding-habit of blue cloth with long folds, a fichu of China silk twisted about her neck like a man's tie, her black, fine hair caught up carelessly above the antique modelling of her small head, Félicia was at work with an extreme earnestness which added to her beauty the concentration, the intensity which are given to the features by an attentive and satisfied expression. But that changed immediately upon the arrival of the doctor.

"Ah, it is you," said she brusquely, as though awaked from a dream. "The bell was rung, then? I did not hear it."

And in the ennui, the lassitude that suddenly took possession of that adorable face, the only thing that remained expressive and brilliant was the eyes, eyes in which the factitious gleam of the Jenkins pills was heightened by a constitutional wildness.

Oh, how the doctor's voice became humble and condescending as he answered her:

"So you are quite absorbed in your work, my dear

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Félicia. Is it something new that you are at work on there? It seems to me very pretty."

He moved towards the rough and still formless model out of which there was beginning to issue vaguely a group of two animals, one a greyhound which was scampering at full speed with a rush that was truly extraordinary.

"The idea of it came to me last night. I began to work it out by lamplight. My poor Kadour, he sees no fun in it," said the girl, glancing with a look of caressing kindness at the greyhound whose paws the little page was endeavouring to place apart in order to get the pose again.

Jenkins remarked in a fatherly way that she did wrong to tire herself thus, and taking her wrist with ecclesiastical precautions:

"Come, I am sure you are feverish."

At the contact of his hand with her own, Félicia made a movement almost of repulsion.

"No, no, leave me alone. Your pills can do nothing for me. When I do not work I am bored. I am bored to death, to extinction; my thoughts are the colour of that water which flows over yonder, brackish and heavy. To be commencing life, and to be disgusted with it! It is hard. I am reduced to the point of envying my poor Constance, who passes her days in her chair, without opening her mouth, but smiling to herself over her memories of the past. I have not even that, I, happy remembrances to muse upon. I have only work—work!"

As she talked she went on modelling furiously, now with the boasting-tool, now with her fingers, which she wiped from time to time on a little sponge placed on the wooden platform which supported the group; so that her complaints, her melancholies, inexplicable in the mouth of a girl of twenty which, in repose, had the purity of a Greek smile, seemed uttered at random and addressed to no one in particular.

Jenkins, however, appeared disturbed by them, troubled, despite the evident attention which he gave to the work of the artist, or rather to the artist herself, to the triumphant

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grace of this girl whom her beauty seemed to have predestined to the study of the plastic arts.

Embarrassed by the admiring gaze which she felt fixed upon her, Félicia resumed:

"Apropos, I have seen him, you know, your Nabob. Some one pointed him out to me last Friday at the opera."

"You were at the opera on Friday?"

"Yes. The duke had sent me his box."

Jenkins changed colour.

"I persuaded Constance to go with me. It was the first time for twenty-five years, since her farewell performance, that she had been inside the Opera-House. It made a great impression on her. During the ballet, especially, she trembled, she beamed, all her old triumphs sparkled in her eyes. Happy who has emotions like that. A real type, that Nabob. You will have to bring him to see me. He has a head that it would amuse me to do."

"He! Why, he is hideous! You cannot have looked at him carefully."

"On the contrary, I had a perfect view. He was opposite us. That mask, as of a white Ethiopian, would be superb in marble. And not vulgar, in any case. Besides, since he is so ugly as that, you will not be so unhappy as you were last year when I was doing Mora's bust. What a disagreeable face you had, Jenkins, in those days!"

"For ten years of life," muttered Jenkins in a gloomy voice, "I would not have that time over again. But you it amuses to behold suffering."

"You know quite well that nothing amuses me," said she, shrugging her shoulders with a supreme impertinence.

Then, without looking at him, without adding another word, she plunged into one of those dumb activities by which true artists escape from themselves and from everything that surrounds them.

Jenkins paced a few steps in the studio, much moved, with avowals on the tip of his tongue which yet dared not put themselves into words. At length, feeling himself dismissed, he took his hat and walked towards the door.

"So it is understood. I must bring him to see you."

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"Who?"

"Why, the Nabob. It was you who this very moment——"

"Ah, yes," remarked the strange person whose caprices were short-lived. "Bring him if you like. I don't care, otherwise."

And her beautiful dejected voice, in which something seemed broken, the listlessness of her whole personality, said distinctly enough that it was true, that she cared really for nothing in the world.

Jenkins left the room, extremely troubled, and with a gloomy brow. But, the moment he was outside, he assumed once more his laughing and cordial expression, being of those who, in the streets, go masked. The morning was advancing. The mist, still perceptible in the vicinity of the Seine, floated now only in shreds and gave a vaporous unsubstantiality to the houses on the quay, to the river steamers whose paddles remained invisible, to the distant horizon in which the dome of the Invalides hung poised like a gilded balloon with a rope that darted sunbeams. A diffused warmth, the movement in the streets, told that noon was not far distant, that it would be there directly with the striking of all the bells.

Before going on to the Nabob's, Jenkins had, however, one other visit to make. But he appeared to find it a great nuisance. However, since he had made the promise! And, resolutely:

"68 Rue Saint-Ferdinand, at the Ternes," he said, as he sprang into his carriage.

The address required to be repeated twice to the coachman, Joey, who was scandalized; the very horse showed a momentary hesitation, as if the valuable beast and the impeccably clad servant had felt revolt at the idea of driving out to such a distant suburb, beyond the limited but so brilliant circle wherein their master's clients were scattered. The carriage arrived, all the same, without accident, at the end of a provincial-looking, unfinished street, and at the last of its buildings, a house of unfurnished apartments with five stories, which the street seemed to have despatched for-

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ward as a reconnoitring party to discover whether it might continue on that side, isolated as it stood between vaguely marked-out sites waiting to be built upon or heaped with the débris of houses broken down, with blocks of freestone, old shutters lying amid the desolation, mouldy butchers' blocks with broken hinges hanging, an immense ossuary of a whole demolished region of the town.

Innumerable placards were stuck above the door, the latter being decorated by a great frame of photographs white with dust before which Jenkins paused for a moment as he passed. Had the famous doctor come so far, then, simply for the purpose of having a photograph taken? It might have been thought so, judging by the attention with which he stayed to examine this display, the fifteen or twenty photographs which represented the same family in different poses and actions and with varying expressions; an old gentleman, with chin supported by a high white neckcloth, and a leathern portfolio under his arm, surrounded by a bevy of young girls with their hair in plait or in curls, and with modest ornaments on their black frocks. Sometimes the old gentleman had posed with but two of his daughters; or perhaps one of those young and pretty profile figures stood out alone, the elbow resting upon a broken column, the head bowed over a book in a natural and easy pose. But, in short, it was always the same air with variations, and within the glass frame there was no gentleman save the old gentleman with the white neckcloth, nor other feminine figures than those of his numerous daughters.

"Studios upstairs, on the fifth floor," said a line above the frame. Jenkins sighed, measured with his eye the distance that separated the ground from the little balcony up there in the clouds, then he decided to enter. In the corridor he passed a white neckcloth and a majestic leathern portfolio, evidently the old gentleman of the photographic exhibition. Questioned, this individual replied that M. Maranne did indeed live on the fifth floor. "But," he added, with an engaging smile, "the stories are not lofty." Upon this encouragement the Irishman began to ascend a narrow and quite new staircase with landings no larger than a step,

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only one door on each floor, and badly lighted windows through which could be seen a gloomy, ill-paved court-yard and other cage-like staircases, all empty; one of those frightful modern houses, built by the dozen by penniless speculators, and having as their worst disadvantage thin partition walls which oblige all the inhabitants to live in a phalansterian community.

At this particular time the inconvenience was not great, the fourth and fifth floors alone happening to be occupied, as though the tenants had dropped into them from the sky.

On the fourth floor, behind a door with a copper plate bearing the announcement "M. Joyeuse, Expert in Book-keeping," the doctor heard a sound of fresh laughter, of young people's chatter, and of romping steps, which accompanied him to the floor above, to the photographic establishment.

These little businesses perched away in corners with the air of having no communication with any outside world are one of the surprises of Paris. One asks one's self how the people live who go into these trades, what fastidious Providence can, for example, send clients to a photographer lodged on a fifth floor in a nondescript region, well beyond the Rue Saint-Ferdinand, or books to keep to the accountant below. Jenkins, as he made this reflection, smiled in pity, then went straight in as he was invited by the following inscription, "Enter without knocking." Alas! the permission was scarcely abused. A tall young man wearing spectacles, and writing at a small table, with his legs wrapped in a travelling-rug, rose precipitately to greet the visitor whom his short sight had prevented him from recognising.

"Good-morning, André," said the doctor, stretching out his loyal hand.

"M. Jenkins!"

"You see, I am good-natured as I have always been. Your conduct towards us, your obstinacy in persisting in living far away from your parents, imposed a great reserve on me, for my own dignity's sake; but your mother has wept. And here I am."

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While he spoke, he examined the poor little studio, with its bare walls, its scanty furniture, the brand-new photographic apparatus, the little Prussian fireplace, new also and never yet used for a fire, all forced into painfully clear evidence beneath the direct light falling from the glass roof. The drawn face, the scanty beard of the young man, to whom the bright colour of his eyes, the narrow height of his forehead, his long and fair hair thrown backward gave the air of a visionary, everything was accentuated in the crude light; and also the resolute will in that clear glance which settled upon Jenkins coldly, and in advance to all his reasonings, to all his protestations, opposed an invincible resistance.

But the good Jenkins feigned not to perceive anything of this.

"You know, my dear André, since the day when I married your mother I have regarded you as my son. I looked forward to leaving you my practice and my patients, to putting your foot in a golden stirrup, happy to see you following a career consecrated to the welfare of humanity. All at once, without giving any reason, without taking into any consideration the effect which such a rupture might well have in the eyes of the world, you have separated yourself from us, you have abandoned your studies, renounced your future, in order to launch out into I know not what eccentric life, engaging in a ridiculous trade, the refuge and the excuse of all unclassed people."

"I follow this occupation in order to earn a living. It is bread and butter in the meantime."

"In what meantime? While you are waiting for literary glory?"

He glanced disdainfully at the scribbling scattered over the table.

"All that is not serious, you know, and here is what I am come to tell you. An opportunity presents itself to you, a double-swing door opening into the future. The Bethlehem Society is founded. The most splendid of my philanthropic dreams has taken body. We have just purchased a superb villa at Nanterre for the housing of our

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first establishment. It is the care, the management of this house that I have thought of intrusting to you as to an *alter ego*. A princely dwelling, the salary of the commander of a division, and the satisfaction of a service rendered to the great human family. Say one word, and I take you to see the Nabob, the great-hearted man who defrays the expense of our undertaking. Do you accept?"

"No," said the other so curtly that Jenkins was somewhat put out of countenance.

"Just so. I was prepared for this refusal when I came here. But I am come nevertheless. I have taken for motto, 'To do good without hope,' and I remain faithful to my motto. So then, it is understood you prefer to the honourable, worthy, and profitable existence which I have just proposed to you, a life of hazard without aim and without dignity?"

André answered nothing, but his silence spoke for him.

"Take care. You know what that decision will involve, a definitive estrangement, but you have always wanted that. I need not tell you," continued Jenkins, "that to break with me is to break off relations also with your mother. She and I are one."

The young man turned pale, hesitated a moment, then said with effort:

"If it please my mother to come to see me here, I shall be delighted, certainly. But my determination to quit your house, to have no longer anything in common with you, is irrevocable."

"And will you at least say why?"

He made a negative sign; he would not say.

For once the Irishman felt a genuine impulse of anger. His whole face assumed a cunning, savage expression which would have very much astonished those that only knew the good and loyal Jenkins; but he took good care not to push further an explanation which he feared perhaps as much as he desired it.

"Adieu," said he, half turning his head on the threshold. "And never apply to us."

"Never," replied his stepson in a firm voice.

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This time, when the doctor had said to Joey, "Place Vendôme," the horse, as though he had understood that they were going to the Nabob's, gave a proud shake to his glittering curb-chains, and the brougham set off at full speed, transforming each axle of its wheels into sunshine. "To come so far to get a reception like that! A celebrity of the time to be treated thus by that Bohemian! One may try indeed to do good!" Jenkins gave vent to his anger in a long monologue of this character, then suddenly rousing himself, exclaimed, "Ah, bah!" and what anxiety there was remaining on his brow quickly vanished on the pavement of the Place Vendôme. Noon was striking everywhere in the sunshine. Issued forth from behind its curtain of mist, luxurious Paris, awake and on its feet, was commencing its whirling day. The shop-windows of the Rue de la Paix shone brightly. The mansions of the square seemed to be ranging themselves haughtily for the receptions of the afternoon; and, right at the end of the Rue Castiglione with its white arcades, the Tuileries, beneath a fine burst of winter sunshine, raised shivering statues, pink with cold, amid the stripped trees.

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II

A LUNCHEON IN THE PLACE VENDÔME

THERE were scarcely more than a score of persons that morning in the Nabob's dining-room, a dining-room in carved oak, supplied the previous evening as it were by some great upholsterer, who at the same stroke had furnished these suites of four drawing-rooms of which you caught sight through an open doorway, the hangings on the ceiling, the objects of art, the chandeliers, even the very plate on the sideboards and the servants who were in attendance. It was obviously the kind of interior improvised the moment he was out of the railway-train by a gigantic *parvenu* in haste to enjoy. Although around the table there was no trace of any feminine presence, no bright frock to enliven it, its aspect was yet not monotonous, thanks to the dissimilarity, the oddness of the guests, people belonging to every section of society, specimens of humanity defached from all races, in France, in Europe, in the entire globe, from the top to the bottom of the social ladder. To begin with, the master of the house—a kind of giant, tanned, burned by the sun, saffron-coloured, with head in his shoulders. His nose, which was short and lost in the puffiness of his face, his woolly hair massed like a cap of astrakhan above a low and obstinate forehead, and his bristly eyebrows with eyes like those of an ambushed chapard gave him the ferocious aspect of a Kalmuck, of some frontier savage living by war and rapine. Fortunately the lower part of the face, the fleshy and strong lip which was lightened now and then by a smile adorable in its kindness, quite redeemed, by an expression like that of a St. Vincent de Paul, this fierce ugliness, this physiognomy so original that it was no longer vulgar. An inferior extraction, however, be-

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trayed itself yet again by the voice, the voice of a Rhone waterman, raucous and thick, in which the southern accent became rather uncouth than hard, and by two broad and short hands, hairy at the back, square and nailless fingers which, laid on the whiteness of the table-cloth, spoke of their past with an embarrassing eloquence. Opposite him, on the other side of the table at which he was one of the habitual guests, was seated the Marquis de Monpavon, but a Monpavon presenting no resemblance to the painted spectre of whom we had a glimpse in the last chapter. He was now a haughty man of no particular age, fine majestic nose, a lordly bearing, displaying a large shirt-front of immaculate linen crackling beneath the continual effort of the chest to throw itself forward, and bulging itself out each time with a noise like that made by a white turkey when it struts in anger, or by a peacock when he spreads his tail. His name of Monpavon suited him well.

Of great family and of a wealthy stock, but ruined by gambling and speculation, the friendship of the Duc de Mora had secured him an appointment as receiver-general in the first class. Unfortunately his health had not permitted him to retain this handsome position—well-informed people said his health had nothing to do with it—and for the last year he had been living in Paris, awaiting his restoration to health, according to his own account of the matter, before resuming his post. The same people were confident that he would never regain it, and that even were it not for certain exalted influences— However, he was the important personage of the luncheon; that was clear from the manner in which the servants waited upon him, and the Nabob consulted him, calling him "Monsieur le Marquis," as at the Comédie-Française, less almost out of deference than from pride, by reason of the honour which it reflected upon himself. Full of disdain for the people around him, M. le Marquis spoke little, in a very high voice, and as though he were stooping towards those whom he was honouring with his conversation. From time to time he would throw to the Nabob across the table a few words enigmatical for all.

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"I saw the duke yesterday. He was talking a great deal about you in connection with that matter. You know, that thing—that business. What was the name of it?"

"You really mean it? He spoke of me to you?" And the good Nabob, quite proud, would look around him with movements of the head that were supremely laughable, or perhaps assume the contemplative air of a devotee who should hear the name of Our Lord pronounced.

"His excellency would have pleasure in seeing you take up the—ps, ps, ps—the thing."

"He told you so?"

"Ask the governor if he did not—heard it like myself."

The person who was called the governor—Paganetti, to give him his real name—was a little, expressive man, constantly gesticulating and fatiguing to behold, so many were the different expressions which his face would assume in the course of a single minute. He was managing director of the Territorial Bank of Corsica, a vast financial enterprise, and had now come to the house for the first time, introduced by Monpavon; he occupied accordingly a place of honour. On the other side of the Nabob was an old gentleman, buttoned up to the chin in a frock-coat having a straight collar without lapels, like an Oriental tunic, his face slashed by a thousand little bloodshot veins and wearing a white moustache of military cut. It was Brahim Bey, the most valiant colonel of the Regency of Tunis, aide-de-camp of the former Bey who had made the fortune of Jansoulet. The glorious exploits of this warrior showed themselves written in wrinkles, in blemishes wrought by debauchery upon the nerveless under-lip that hung as it were relaxed, and upon his eyes without lashes, inflamed and red. It was a head such as one may see in the dock at certain criminal trials that are held with closed doors. The other guests were seated pell-mell, just as they had happened to arrive or to find themselves, for the house was open to everybody, and the table was laid every morning for thirty persons.

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There was present the manager of the theatre financed by the Nabob, Cardailhac, renowned for his wit almost as much as for his insolvencies, a marvellous carver who, while he was engaged in severing the limbs of a partridge, would prepare one of his witticisms and deposit it with a wing upon the plate which was presented to him. He worked up his witticisms instead of improvising them, and the new fashion of serving meats, *à la Russe* and carved beforehand, had been fatal to him by its removal of all excuse for a preparatory silence. Consequently it was the general remark that his vogue was on the decline. Parisian, moreover, a dandy to the finger tips, and, as he himself was wont to boast, "with not one particle of superstition in his whole body," a characteristic which permitted him to give very piquant details concerning the ladies of his theatre to Brahim Bey—who listened to him as one turns over the pages of a naughty book—and to talk theology to the young priest who was his nearest neighbour, a curate of some little southern village, lean and with a complexion sunburnt till it matched the cloth of his cassock in colour, with fiery patches above the cheek-bones, and the pointed, forward-pushing nose of the ambitious man, who would remark to Cardailhac very loudly, in a tone of protection and sacerdotal authority:

"We are quite pleased with M. Guizot. He is doing very well—very well. It is a conquest for the Church."

Seated next this pontiff, with a black neck-band, old Schwalbach, the famous picture-dealer, displayed his prophet's beard, tawny in places like a dirty fleece, his three overcoats tinged by mildew, all that loose and negligent attire for which he was excused in the name of art, and because, in a time when the mania for picture galleries had already begun to cause millions to change hands, it was the proper thing to entertain the man who was the best placed for the conduct of these absurdly vain transactions. Schwalbach did not speak, contenting himself with gazing around him through his enormous monocle, shaped like a hand magnifying-glass, and with smiling in his beard over the singular neighbours made by this unique assembly. Thus

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it happened that M. de Monpavon had quite close to him —and it was a sight to watch how the disdainful curve of his nose was accentuated at each glance in that direction— the singer Garrigou, a fellow-countryman of Jansoulet, a distinguished ventriloquist who sang Figaro in the dialect of the south, and had no equal in his imitations of animals. Just beyond, Cabassu, another compatriot, a little short and dumpy man, with the neck of a bull and the biceps of a statue by Michel Angelo, who suggested at once a Marseilles hairdresser and the strong man at a fair, a masseur, pedicure, manicure, and something of a dentist, sat with elbows on the table with the coolness of a charlatan whom one receives in the morning and who knows the little infirmities, the intimate distresses of the abode in which he chances to find himself. M. Bompain completed this array of subordinates, all alike in one respect at any rate, Bompain, the secretary, the steward, the confidential agent, through whose hands the entire business of the house passed; and it sufficed to observe that solemnly stupid attitude, that indefinite manner, the Turkish fez placed awkwardly on a head suggestive of a village school-master, in order to understand to what manner of people interests like those of the Nabob had been abandoned.

Finally, to fill the gaps among these figures I have sketched, the Turkish crowd—Tunisians, Moors, Egyptians, Levantines; and, mingled with this exotic element, a whole variegated Parisian Bohemia of ruined noblemen, doubtful traders, penniless journalists, inventors of strange products, people arrived from the south without a farthing, all the lost ships needing revictualling, or flocks of birds wandering aimlessly in the night, which were drawn by this great fortune as by the light of a beacon. The Nabob admitted this miscellaneous collection of individuals to his table out of kindness, out of generosity, out of weakness, by reason of his easy-going manners, joined to an absolute ignorance and a survival of that loneliness of the exile, of that need for expansion which, down yonder in Tunis, in his splendid palace of the Bardo, had caused him to welcome everybody who hailed from France, from the small trades-

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man exporting Parisian wares to the famous pianist on tour and the consul-general himself.

As one listened to those various accents, those foreign intonations, gruff or faltering, as one gazed upon those widely different physiognomies, some violent, barbarous, vulgar, others hyper-civilized, worn, suggestive only of the Boulevard and as it were flaccid, one noted that the same diversity was evident also among the servants who, some apparently lads just out of an office, insolent in manner, with heads of hair like a dentist's or a bath-attendant's, busied themselves among Ethiopians standing motionless and shining like candelabra of black marble, and it was impossible to say exactly where one was; in any case, you would never have imagined yourself to be in the Place Vendôme, right in the beating heart and very centre of the life of our modern Paris. Upon the table there was a like importation of exotic dishes, saffron or anchovy sauces, spices mixed up with Turkish delicacies, chickens with fried almonds, and all this, taken together with the banality of the interior, the gilding of the panels, the shrill ringing of the new bells, gave the impression of a *table d'hôte* in some big hotel in Smyrna or Calcutta, or of a luxurious dining-saloon on board a transatlantic liner, the "Pereire" or the "Sinai."

It might seem that this diversity among the guests—I was about to say among the passengers—ought to have caused the meal to be animated and noisy. Far otherwise. They all ate nervously, watching each other out of eye-corners, and even those most accustomed to society, those who appeared the most at their ease, had in their glance the wandering look and the distraction of a fixed idea, a feverish anxiety which caused them to speak without relevance and to listen without understanding a word of what was being said to them.

Suddenly the door of the dining-room opened.

"Ah, here comes Jenkins!" exclaimed the Nabob delightedly. "Welcome, welcome, doctor. How are you, my friend?"

A smile to those around, a hearty shake of his host's

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hand, and Jenkins sat down opposite him, next to Monpavon, before a place at the table which a servant had just prepared in all haste and without having received any order, exactly as at a *table d'hôte*. Among those preoccupied and feverish faces, this one at any rate stood out in contrast by its good humour, its cheerfulness, and that loquacious and flattering benevolence which makes the Irish in a way the Gascons of England. And what a splendid appetite! With what heartiness, what ease of conscience he used his white teeth as he talked!

"Well, Jansoulet, you have read it?"

"What?"

"How, then! you do not know? You have not read what the *Messenger* says about you this morning?"

Beneath the dark tan of his cheeks the Nabob blushed like a child, and, his eyes shining with pleasure:

"Is it possible—the *Messenger* has spoken of me?"

"Through two columns. How is it that Moëssard has not shown it to you?"

"Oh," put in Moëssard modestly, "it was not worth the trouble."

He was a little journalist, with a fair complexion and smart in his dress, sufficiently good-looking, but with a face which presented that worn appearance noticeable as the special mark of waiters in night-restaurants, actors, and light women, and produced by conventional grimacing and the wan reflection of gaslight. He was reputed to be the paid lover of an exiled and profligate queen. The rumour was whispered around him, and, in his own world, secured him an envied and despicable position.

Jansoulet insisted on reading the article, impatient to know what had been said of him. Unfortunately Jenkins had left his copy at the duke's.

"Let some one go fetch me a *Messenger* quickly," said the Nabob to the servant behind him.

Moëssard intervened.

"It is needless. I must have the thing on me somewhere."

And with the absence of ceremony of the tavern *ha-*

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bitué, of the reporter who scribbles his paragraph with his glass beside him, the journalist drew out a pocket-book crammed full of notes, stamped papers, newspaper cuttings, notes written on glazed paper with crests, which he proceeded to litter over the table, pushing away his plate in order to search for the proof of his article.

"There you are." He passed it over to Jansoulet; but Jenkins besought him:

"No, no; read it aloud."

The company having echoed the request in chorus, Moëssard took back his proof and commenced to read in a loud voice, "The Bethlehem Society and Mr. Bernard Jansoulet," a long dithyramb in favour of artificial lactation, written from notes made by Jenkins, which were recognisable through certain fine phrases much affected by the Irishman, such as "the long martyrology of childhood," "the sordid traffic in the breast," "the beneficent nanny-goat as foster-mother," and finishing, after a pompous description of the splendid establishment at Nanterre, with a eulogy of Jenkins and a glorification of Jansoulet: "O Bernard Jansoulet, benefactor of childhood!" It was a sight to see the vexed, scandalized faces of the guests. What an intriguer was this Moëssard! What an impudent piece of sycophantry! And the same envious, disdainful smile quivered on every mouth. And the deuce of it was that a man had to applaud, to appear charmed, the master of the house not being weary as yet of incense, and taking everything very seriously, both the article and the applause which it provoked. His big face shone during the reading. Often, down yonder, far away, had he dreamed a dream of having his praises sung like this in the newspapers of Paris, of being somebody in that society, the first among all, on which the entire world has its eyes fixed as on the bearer of a torch. Now, that dream was becoming a reality. He gazed upon all these people seated at his board, the sumptuous dessert, this panelled dining-room as high, certainly, as the church of his native village; he listened to the dull murmur of Paris rolling along in its carriages and treading the pavements beneath

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his windows, with the intimate conviction that he was about to become an important piece in that active and complicated machine. And then, through the atmosphere of physical well-being produced by the meal, between the lines of that triumphant vindication, by an effect of contrast, he beheld unfold itself his own existence, his youth, adventurous as it was sad, the days without bread, the nights without shelter. Then suddenly, the reading having come to an end, his joy overflowing in one of those southern effusions which force thought into speech, he cried, beaming upon his guests with that frank and thick-lipped smile of his:

"Ah, my friends, my dear friends, if you could know how happy I am! What pride I feel!"

Scarce six weeks had passed since he had landed in France. Excepting two or three compatriots, those whom he thus addressed as his friends were but the acquaintances of a day, and that through his having lent them money. This sudden expansion, therefore, appeared sufficiently extraordinary; but Jansoulet, too much under the sway of emotion to notice anything, continued:

"After what I have just heard, when I behold myself here in this great Paris, surrounded by all its wealth of illustrious names, of distinguished intellects, and then call up the remembrance of my father's booth! For I was born in a booth. My father used to sell old nails at the corner of a boundary stone in the Bourg-Saint-Andéol. If we had bread in the house every day and stew every Sunday it was the most we had to expect. Ask Cabassu whether it was not so. He knew me in those days. He can tell you whether I am not speaking the truth. Oh, yes, I have known what poverty is." He threw back his head with an impulse of pride as he savoured the odour of truffles diffused through the suffocating atmosphere. "I have known it, and the real thing too, and for a long time. I have been cold. I have known hunger—genuine hunger, remember—the hunger that intoxicates, that wrings the stomach, sets circles dancing in your head, deprives you of sight as if the inside of your eyes was being gouged out

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with an oyster-knife. I have passed days in bed for want of an overcoat to go out in; fortunate at that when I had a bed, which was not always. I have sought my bread from every trade, and that bread cost me such bitter toil, it was so black, so tough, that in my mouth I keep still the flavour of its acrid and mouldy taste. And thus until I was thirty. Yes, my friends, at thirty years of age—and I am not yet fifty—I was still a beggar, without a sou, without a future, with the remorseful thought of the poor old mother, become a widow, who was half-dying of hunger away yonder in her booth, and to whom I had nothing to give."

Around this Amphitryon recounting the story of his evil days the faces of his hearers expressed curiosity. Some appeared shocked, Monpavon especially. For him, this exposure of rags was in execrable taste, an absolute breach of good manners. Cardailhac, sceptical and dainty, an enemy to scenes of emotion, with face set as if it were hypnotized, sliced a fruit on the end of his fork into wafers as thin as cigarette papers.

The governor exhibited, on the contrary, a flatly admiring demeanour, uttering exclamations of amazement and compassion; while, not far away, in singular contrast, Brahmin Bey, the thunderbolt of war, upon whom this reading followed by a lecture after a heavy meal had had the effect of inducing a restorative slumber, slept with his mouth open beneath his white moustache, his face congested by his collar, which had slipped up. But the most general expression was one of indifference and boredom. What could it matter to them, I ask you; what had they to do with Jansoulet's childhood in the Bourg-Saint-Andéol, the trials he had endured, the way in which he had trudged his path? They had not come to listen to idle nonsense of that kind. Airs of interest falsely affected, glances that counted the ovals of the ceiling or the bread-crumbs on the table-cloth, mouths compressed to stifle a yawn, betrayed, accordingly, the general impatience provoked by this untimely story. Yet he himself seemed not to weary of it. He found pleasure in the recital of his

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sufferings past, even as the mariner safe in port, remembering his voyagings over distant seas, and the perils and the great shipwrecks. There followed the story of his good luck, the prodigious chance that had placed him suddenly upon the road to fortune. "I was wandering about the quays of Marseilles with a comrade as poverty-stricken as myself, who is become rich, he also, in the service of the Bey, and, after having been my chum, my partner, is now my most cruel enemy. I may mention his name, *pardi!* It is sufficiently well known—Hemerlingue. Yes, gentlemen, the head of the great banking house. 'Hemerlingue & Co.' had not in those days even the wherewithal to buy a pennyworth of *clauvisses* on the quay. Intoxicated by the atmosphere of travel that one breathes down there, the idea came into our minds of starting out, of going to seek our livelihood in some country where the sun shines, since the lands of mist were so inhospitable to us. But where to go? We did what sailors sometimes do in order to decide in what low hole they will squander their pay. You fix a scrap of paper on the brim of your hat. You make the hat spin on a walking-stick; when it stops spinning you follow the pointer. In our case the paper needle pointed towards Tunis. A week later I landed at Tunis with half a louis in my pocket, and I came back to-day with twenty-five millions!"

An electric shock passed round the table; there was a gleam in every eye, even in those of the servants. Cardailhac said, "Phew!" Monpavon's nose descended to common humanity.

"Yes, my boys, twenty-five millions in liquidated cash, without speaking of all that I have left in Tunis, of my two palaces at the Bardo, of my vessels in the harbour of La Goulette, of my diamonds, of my precious stones, which are worth certainly more than the double. And you know," he added, with his kindly smile and in his hoarse, plebeian voice, "when that is done there will still be more."

The whole company rose to its feet, galvanized.

"Bravo! Ah, bravo!"

"Splendid!"

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"Deuced clever—deuced clever!"

"Now, that is something worth talking about."

"A man like him ought to be in the Chamber."

"He will be, *per Bacco!* I answer for it," said the governor in a piercing voice; and in a transport of admiration, not knowing how to express his enthusiasm, he seized the fat, hairy hand of the Nabob and on an unreflective impulse raised it to his lips. They are demonstrative in his country. Everybody was standing up; no one sat down again.

Jansoulet, beaming, had risen in his turn, and, throwing down his serviette: "Let us go and have some coffee," he said.

A glad tumult immediately spread through the salons, vast apartments in which light, decoration, sumptuousness, were represented by gold alone. It seemed to fall from the ceiling in blinding rays, it oozed from the walls in mouldings, sashes, framings of every kind. A little of it remained on your hands if you moved a piece of furniture or opened a window; and the very hangings, dipped in this Pactolus, kept on their straight folds the rigidity, the sparkle of a metal. But nothing bearing the least personal stamp, nothing intimate, nothing thought out. The monotonous luxury of the furnished flat. And there was a re-enforcement of this impression of a moving camp, of a merely provisory home, in the suggestion of travel which hovered like an uncertainty or a menace over this fortune derived from far-off sources.

Coffee having been served, in the Eastern manner, with all its grounds, in little cups filigreed with silver, the guests grouped themselves round, making haste to drink, scalding themselves, keeping watchful eyes on each other and especially on the Nabob as they looked out for the favourable moment to spring upon him, draw him into some corner of those immense rooms, and at length negotiate their loan. For this it was that they had been awaiting for two hours; this was the object of their visit and the fixed idea which gave them during the meal that absent, falsely attentive manner. But here no more constraint, no more

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pretence. In that peculiar social world of theirs it is of common knowledge that in the Nabob's busy life the hour of coffee remains the only time free for private audiences, and each desiring to profit by it, all having come there in order to snatch a handful of wool from the golden fleece offered them with so much good nature, people no longer talk, they no longer listen, every man is absorbed in his own errand of business.

It is the good Jenkins who begins. Having drawn his friend Jansoulet aside into a recess, he submits to him the estimates for the house at Nanterre. A big purchase, indeed! A cash price of a hundred and fifty thousand francs, then considerable expenses in connection with getting the place into proper order, the personal staff, the bedding, the nanny-goats for milking purposes, the manager's carriage, the omnibuses going to meet the children coming by every train. A great deal of money. But how well off and comfortable they will be there, those dear little things! what a service rendered to Paris, to humanity! The Government cannot fail to reward with a bit of red ribbon so disinterested, so philanthropic a devotion. "The Cross, on the 15th of August." With these magic words Jenkins will obtain everything he desires. In his merry, guttural voice, which seems always as though it were hailing a boat in a fog, the Nabob calls, "Bompain!"

The man in the fez, quickly leaving the liqueur-stand, walks majestically across the room, whispers, moves away, and returns with an inkstand and a counterfoil check-book from which the slips detach themselves and fly away of their own accord. A fine thing, wealth! To sign a check on his knee for two hundred thousand francs troubles Jansoulet no more than to draw a louis from his pocket.

Furious, with noses in their cups, the others watch this little scene from a distance. Then, as Jenkins takes his departure, bright, smiling, with a nod to the various groups, Monpavon seizes the governor: "Now is our chance." And both, springing on the Nabob, drag him off towards a couch, oblige him almost forcibly to sit down, press upon each side of him with a ferocious little laugh that seems

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to signify, "What shall we do with him now?" Get money out of him, the largest amount possible. It is needed, to set afloat once more the Territorial Bank, for years lain aground on a sand-bank, buried to the very top of its masts. A superb operation, this re-flotation, if these two gentlemen are to be believed, for the submerged bank is full of ingots, of precious things, of the thousand various forms of wealth of a new country discussed by everybody and known by none.

In founding this unique establishment, Paganetti of Porto-Vecchio had as his aim to monopolize the commercial development of the whole of Corsica: iron mines, sulphur mines, copper mines, marble quarries, coral fisheries, oyster beds, water ferruginous and sulphurous, immense forests of thuya, of cork-oak, and to establish for the facilitation of this development a network of railways over the island, with a service of packet-boats in addition. Such is the gigantic undertaking to which he has devoted himself. He has sunk considerable capital in it, and it is the newcomer, the workman of the last hour, who will gain the whole profit.

While with his Italian accent and violent gestures the Corsican enumerates the "splendours" of the affair, Monpavon, haughty, and with an air calculated to command confidence, nods his head approvingly with conviction, and from time to time, when he judges the moment propitious, throws into the conversation the name of the Duc de Mora, which never fails in its effect on the Nabob.

"Well, in short, how much would be required?"

"Millions," says Monpavon boldly, in the tone of a man who would have no difficulty in addressing himself elsewhere. "Yes, millions; but the enterprise is magnificent. And, as his excellency was saying, it would provide a capitalist with an opportunity of securing a high position, even a political position. Just think! In that district without a metallic currency, you might become counsellor-general, deputy." The Nabob gives a start. And the little Paganetti, who feels the bait quiver on his hook: "Yes, deputy. You will be that whenever I choose. At a sign

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from me all Corsica is at your disposal." Then he launches out into an astonishing improvisation, counting the votes which he controls, the cantons which will obey his call. "You bring me your capital. I—I give you an entire people." The cause is gained.

"Bompain, Bompain!" calls the Nabob, roused to enthusiasm. He has now but one fear, that is lest the thing escape him; and in order to bind Paganetti, who has not concealed his need of money, he hastens to effect the payment of a first instalment to the Territorial Bank. New appearance of the man in red breeches with the check-book which he carries clasped gravely to his chest, like a choir-boy moving the Gospel from one side to the other. New inscription of Jansoulet's signature upon a slip, which the governor pockets with a negligent air and which operates on his person a sudden transformation. The Paganetti who was so humble and spiritless just now, goes away with the assurance of a man worth four hundred thousand francs, while Monpavon, carrying it even higher than usual, follows after him in his steps, and watches over him with a more than paternal solicitude.

"That's a good piece of business done," says the Nabob to himself. "I can drink my coffee now."

But the borrowers are waiting for him to pass. The most prompt, the most adroit, is Cardailhac, the manager, who lays hold of him and bears him off into a side-room.

"Let us have a little talk, old friend. I must explain to you the situation of affairs in connection with our theatre." Very complicated, doubtless, the situation; for here is M. Bompain, who advances once more, and there are the slips of blue paper flying away from the check-book. Whose turn now? There is the journalist Moëssard coming to draw his pay for the article in the *Messenger*; the Nabob will find out what it costs to have one's self called "benefactor of childhood" in the morning papers. There is the parish priest from the country who demands funds for the restoration of his church, and takes checks by assault with the brutality of a Peter the Hermit. There is

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old Schwalbach coming up with nose in his beard and winking mysteriously.

"Sh! He has found a pearl for monsieur's gallery, an Hobbéma from the collection of the Duc de Mora. But several people are after it. It will be difficult——"

"I must have it at any price," says the Nabob, hooked by the name of Mora. "You understand, Schwalbach. I must have this Hobbéma. Twenty thousand francs for you if you secure it."

"I shall do my utmost, M. Jansoulet."

And the old rascal calculates, as he goes away, that the twenty thousand of the Nabob added to the ten thousand promised him by the duke if he gets rid of his picture for him, will make a nice little profit for himself.

While these fortunate ones follow each other, others look on around, wild with impatience, biting their nails to the quick, for all are come on the same errand. From the good Jenkins, who opened the advance, to the masseur Cabassu, who closes it, all draw the Nabob away to some room apart. But, however far they lead him down this gallery of reception-rooms, there is always some indiscreet mirror to reflect the profile of the host and the gestures of his broad back. That back has eloquence. Now and then it straightens itself up in indignation. "Oh, no; that is too much." Or again it sinks forward with a comical resignation. "Well, since it must be so." And always Bompain's fez in some corner of the view.

When those are finished, others arrive. They are the small fry who follow in the wake of the big eaters in the ferocious hunts of the rivers. There is a continual coming and going through these handsome white-and-gold drawing-rooms, a noise of doors, an established current of barefaced and vulgar exploitation attracted from the four corners of Paris and the suburbs by this gigantic fortune and incredible facility.

For these small sums, these regular distributions, recourse was not had to the check-book. For such purposes the Nabob kept in one of his rooms a mahogany chest of drawers, a horrible little piece of furniture repre-

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senting the savings of a house porter, the first that Jansoulet had bought when he had been able to give up living in furnished apartments; which he had preserved since, like a gambler's fetish; and the three drawers of which contained always two hundred thousand francs in cash. It was to this constant supply that he had recourse on the days of his large receptions, displaying a certain ostentation in the way in which he would handle the gold and silver, by great handfuls, thrusting it to the bottom of his pockets to draw it out thence with the gesture of a cattle dealer; a certain vulgar way of raising the skirts of his frock-coat and of sending his hand "to the bottom and into the pile." To-day there must be a terrible void in the drawers of the little chest.

After so many mysterious whispered confabulations, demands more or less clearly formulated, chance entries and triumphant departures, the last client having been dismissed, the chest of drawers closed and locked, the flat in the Place Vendôme began to empty in the uncertain light of the afternoon towards four o'clock, that close of the November days so exceedingly prolonged afterward by artificial light. The servants were clearing away the coffee and the raki, and bearing off the open and half-emptied cigar-boxes. The Nabob, thinking himself alone, gave a sigh of relief. "Ouf! that's over." But no. Opposite him, some one comes out from a corner that is already dark, and approaches with a letter in his hand.

Another!

And at once, mechanically, the poor man made that eloquent, horse-dealer's gesture of his. Instinctively, also, the visitor showed a movement of recoil so prompt, so hurt, that the Nabob understood that he was making a mistake, and took the trouble to examine the young man who stood before him, simply but correctly dressed, of a dull complexion, without the least sign of a beard, with regular features, perhaps a little too serious and fixed for his age, which, aided by his hair of pale blond colour, curled in little ringlets like a powdered wig, gave him the appearance of a young deputy of the Commons under Louis XVI,

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the head of a Barnave at twenty! This face, although the Nabob beheld it for the first time, was not absolutely unknown to him.

"What do you desire, monsieur?"

Taking the letter which the young man held out to him, he went to a window in order to see to read it.

"Té! It is from mamma."

He said it with so happy an air; that word "mamma" lit up all his face with so young, so kind a smile, that the visitor, who had been at first repulsed by the vulgar aspect of this *parvenu*, felt himself filled with sympathy for him.

In an undertone the Nabob read these few lines written in an awkward hand, incorrect and shaky, which contrasted with the large glazed note-paper, with its heading "Château de Saint-Romans."

"My dear son, this letter will be delivered to you by the eldest son of M. de Géry, the former justice of the peace for Bourg-Saint-Andéol, who has shown us so much kindness."

The Nabob broke off his reading.

"I ought to have recognised you, M. de Géry. You resemble your father. Sit down, I beg of you."

Then he finished running through the letter. His mother asked him nothing precise, but, in the name of the services which the de Géry family had rendered them in former years, she recommended M. Paul to him. An orphan, burdened with the care of his two young brothers, he had been called to the bar in the south, and was now coming to Paris to seek his fortune. She implored Jansoulet to aid him, "for he needed it badly, poor fellow," and she signed herself, "Thy mother who pines for thee, Françoise."

This letter from his mother, whom he had not seen for six years, those expressions of the south country of which he could hear the intonations that he knew so well, that coarse handwriting which sketched for him an adored face, all wrinkled, scored, and cracked, but smiling beneath its peasant's head-dress, had affected the Nabob. During the six weeks that he had been in France, lost in the whirl of

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Paris, in the business of getting settled in his new habitation, he had not yet given a thought to his dear old lady at home; and now he saw all of her again in these lines. He remained a moment looking at the letter, which trembled in his heavy fingers.

Then, this emotion having passed:

"M. de Géry," said he, "I am glad of the opportunity which is about to permit me to repay to you a little of the kindness which your family has shown to mine. From to-day, if you consent, I take you into my house. You are educated, you seem intelligent, you can be of great service to me. I have a thousand plans, a thousand affairs in hand. I am being drawn into a crowd of large industrial enterprises. I want some one who will aid me; represent me at need. I have indeed a secretary, a steward, that excellent Bompain, but the unfortunate fellow knows nothing of Paris; he has been, as it were, bewildered ever since his arrival. You will tell me that you also come straight from the country, but that does not matter. Well brought up as you are, a southerner, alert and adaptable, you will quickly pick up the routine of the Boulevard. For the rest, I myself undertake your education from that point of view. In a few weeks you will find yourself, I answer for it, as much at home in Paris as I am."

Poor man! It was touching to hear him speak of his Parisian habits, and of his experience; he whose destiny it was to be always a beginner.

"Now, that is understood, is it not? I engage you as secretary. You will have a fixed salary which we will settle directly, and I shall provide you with the opportunity to make your fortune rapidly."

And while de Géry, raised suddenly above all the anxieties of a newcomer, of one who solicits a favour, of a neophyte, did not move for fear of awaking from a dream:

"Now," said the Nabob to him in a gentle voice, "sit down there, next me, and let us talk a little about mamma."

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III

MEMOIRS OF AN OFFICE PORTER—A MERE GLANCE AT THE TERRITORIAL BANK

I HAD just finished my frugal morning repast and, as my habit was, placed the remains of my modest provisions in the board-room safe, a magnificent safe with a secret lock, which has served me as a store-cupboard during four years, almost, that I have been at the Territorial. Suddenly the governor walks into the offices, with his face all red and eyes inflamed, as though after a night's feasting, draws in his breath noisily, and in rude terms says to me, with his Italian accent:

"But this place stinks, *Moussiou* Passajon."

The place did not stink, if you like the word. Only—shall I say it?—I had ordered a few onions to garnish a knuckle of veal which Mme. Séraphine had sent down to me, she being the cook on the second floor, whose accounts I write out for her every evening. I tried to explain the matter to the governor, but he had flown into a temper, saying that to his mind there was no sense in poisoning the atmosphere of an office in that way, and that it was not worth while to maintain premises at a rent of twelve thousand francs, with eight windows fronting full on the Boulevard Malesherbes, in order to roast onions in them. I don't know what he did not say to me in his passion. For my own part, naturally I got angry at hearing myself addressed in that insolent manner. It is surely the least a man can do to be polite with people in his service whom he does not pay. What the deuce! So I answered him that it was annoying, in truth, but that if the

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Territorial Bank paid me what it owed me, namely, four years' arrears of salary, *plus* seven thousand francs personal advances made by me to the governor for expenses of cabs, newspapers, cigars, and American grogs on board days, I would go and eat decently at the nearest cookshop, and should not be reduced to cooking, in the room where our board was accustomed to sit, a wretched stew, for which I had to thank the public compassion of female cooks. Take that!

In speaking thus I had yielded to an impulse of indignation very excusable in the eyes of any person whatever acquainted with my position here. Even so, I had said nothing improper and had confined myself within the limits of language conformable to my age and education. (I must have mentioned somewhere in the course of these memoirs that of the sixty-five years I have lived I passed more than thirty as beadle to the Faculty of Letters in Dijon. Hence my taste for reports and memoirs, and those ideas of academical style of which traces will be found in many passages of this lucubration.) I had, then, expressed myself in the governor's presence with the most complete reserve, without employing any one of those terms of abuse to which he is treated by everybody here, from our two censors—M. de Monpavon, who, every time he comes, calls him laughingly "Fleur-de-Mazas," and M. de Bois l'Héry, of the Trumpet Club, coarse as a groom, who, for adieu, always greets him with, "To your bedstead, bug!"—to our cashier, whom I have heard repeat a hundred times, tapping on his big book, "That he has in there enough to send him to the galleys when he pleases." Ah, well! All the same, my simple observation produced an extraordinary effect upon him. The circles round his eyes became quite yellow, and, trembling with rage, one of those evil rages of his country, he uttered these words: "Passajon, you are a blackguard. One word more, and I discharge you!" Stupor nailed me to the floor when I heard them. Discharge me—*me!* and my four years' arrears, and my seven thousand francs of money lent!

As though he could read my thought before it was put

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into words, the governor replied that all accounts were going to be settled, mine included. "And as to that," he added, "summon these gentlemen to my private room. I have important news to announce to them."

Upon that, he went into his office, banging the doors.

That devil of a man! In vain you may know him to the core—know him a liar, a comedian—he manages always to get the better of you with his stories. My account, mine!—mine! I was so affected by the thought that my legs seemed to give way beneath me as I went to inform the staff.

According to the regulations, there are twelve of us employed at the Territorial Bank, including the governor and the handsome Moëssard, manager of *Financial Truth*; but more than half of that number are wanting. To begin with, since *Truth* ceased to be issued—it is two years since its last appearance—M. Moëssard has not once set foot in the place. It seems he moves amid honours and riches, has a queen for his mistress—a real queen—who gives him all the money he desires. Oh, what a Babylon, this Paris! The others come from time to time to learn whether by chance anything new has happened at the bank; and, as nothing ever has, we remain weeks without seeing them. Four or five faithful ones, all poor old men like myself, persist in putting in an appearance regularly every morning at the same hour, from habit, from want of occupation, not knowing what else to do. Every one, however, busies himself about things quite foreign to the work of the office. A man must live, you know. And then, too, one cannot pass the day dragging one's self from easy chair to easy chair, from window to window, to look out of doors (eight windows fronting on the Boulevard). So one tries to do some work as best one can. I myself, as I have said, keep the accounts of Mme. Séraphine, and of another cook in the building. Also, I write my memoirs, which, again, takes a good deal of my time. Our receipt clerk—one who has not very hard work with us—makes line for a firm that deals in fishing requisites. Of our two copying-clerks, one, who writes a good hand, copies plays for a

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dramatic agency; the other invents little halfpenny toys which the hawkers sell at street corners about the time of the New Year, and manages by this means to keep himself from dying of hunger during all the rest of the year. Our cashier is the only one who does no outside work. He would believe his honour lost if he did. He is a very proud man, who never utters a complaint, and whose one dread is to have the appearance of being in want of linen. Locked in his office, he is occupied from morning till evening in the manufacture of shirt-fronts, collars, and cuffs of paper. In this he has attained very great skill, and his ever-dazzling linen would deceive, if it were not that at the least movement, when he walks, when he sits down, the stuff crackles upon him as though he had a cardboard box under his waistcoat. Unfortunately all this paper does not feed him; and he is so thin, has such a mien, that you ask yourself on what he lives. Between ourselves, I suspect him of paying a visit sometimes to my store-cupboard. He can do so with ease; for, as cashier, he has the "word" which opens the safe with the secret lock, and I fancy that when my back is turned he forages a little among my provisions.

These are certainly very extraordinary, very incredible internal arrangements for a banking-house. It is, however, the mere truth that I am telling, and Paris is full of financial institutions after the pattern of ours. Oh, if ever I publish my memoirs! But to take up the interrupted thread of my story.

When he saw us all collected in his private room, the manager said to us with solemnity:

"Gentlemen and dear comrades, the time of trials is ended. The Territorial Bank inaugurates a new phase."

Upon this he commenced to speak to us of a superb *combinazione*—it is his favourite word and he pronounces it in such an insinuating manner—a *combinazione* into which there was entering this famous Nabob, of whom all the newspapers are talking. The Territorial Bank was therefore about to find itself in a position which would enable it to acquit itself of its obligations to its faithful servants,

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recognise acts of devotion, rid itself of useless parasites. This for me, I imagine. And in conclusion: "Prepare your statements. All accounts will be settled not later than to-morrow." Unhappily he has so often soothed us with lying words, that the effect of his speech was lost. Formerly these fine promises were always swallowed. At the announcement of a new *combinazione*, there used to be dancing, weeping for joy in the offices, and men would embrace each other like shipwrecked sailors discovering a sail.

Each one would prepare his account for the morrow, as he had said. But on the morrow, no manager. The day following, still nobody. He had left town on a little journey.

At length, one day when all would be there, exasperated, putting out our tongues, maddened by the water which he had brought to our mouths, the governor would arrive, let himself drop into an easy chair, his head in his hands, and before one could speak to him: "Kill me," he would say, "kill me. I am a wretched impostor. The *combinazione* has failed. It has failed, *Péchéro!* the *combinazione*." And he would cry, sob, throw himself on his knees, pluck out his hair by handfuls, roll on the carpet. He would call us all by our Christian names, implore us to put an end to his existence, speak of his wife and children whose ruin he had consummated. And none of us would have the courage to protest in face of a despair so formidable. What do I say? One always ended by sympathizing with him. No, since theatres have existed, never has there been seen a comedian of his ability. But to-day, that is all over, confidence is gone. When he had left, every one shrugged his shoulders. I must admit, however, that for a moment I had been shaken. That assurance about the settling of my account, and then the name of the Nabob, that man so rich——

"You actually believe it, you?" the cashier said to me. "You will be always innocent, then, my poor Passajon. Don't disturb yourself. It will be the same with the Nabob as it was with Moëssard's Queen." And he returned to the manufacture of his shirt-fronts.

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What he had just said referred to the time when Moëssard was making love to his Queen, and had promised the governor that in case of success he would induce her Majesty to put capital into our undertaking. At the office, we were all aware of this new adventure, and very anxious, as you may imagine, that it should succeed quickly, since our money depended upon it. For two months this story held all of us breathless. We felt some disquiet, we kept a watch on Moëssard's face, considered that the lady was inclined to insist upon a great deal of ceremony; and our old cashier, with his dignified and serious air, when he was questioned on the matter, would answer gravely, behind his wire screen: "Nothing fresh," or "The thing is in a good way." Whereupon everybody was contented. One would say to another, "It is making progress," as though merely an ordinary enterprise was in question. No, in good truth, there is only one Paris, where one can see such things. Positively it makes your head turn sometimes. In a word, Moëssard, one fine morning, ceased coming to the office. He had succeeded, it appears, but the Territorial Bank had not seemed to him a sufficiently advantageous investment for the money of his mistress. Now, I ask you, was that honest?

For that matter, the notion of honesty is lost so easily as hardly to be believed. When I reflect that I, Passajon, with my white hair, my venerable appearance, my so blameless past—thirty years of academical services—am grown accustomed to living like a fish in the water, in the midst of these infamies, this swindling! One might well ask what I am doing here, why I remain, how I am come to this.

How I am come to it? Oh, *mon Dieu!* very simply. Four years ago, my wife being dead, my children married, I had just retired from my post as hall-porter at the college, when an advertisement in the newspaper chanced to meet my eye: "Wanted, an office-porter, middle-aged, at the Territorial Bank, 56, Boulevard Malesherbes. Good references." Let me confess it at the outset. The modern Babylon had always attracted me. Then, too, I felt myself

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still a young man. I saw before me ten good years during which I might earn a little money, a great deal, perhaps, by means of investing my savings in the banking-house which I should enter. So I wrote, inclosing my photograph, the one taken at Crespon's, in the Market Place, which represents me with chin closely shaven, a keen eye beneath my thick white eyebrows, my steel chain about my neck, my ribbon as an academy official, "the air of a conscript father upon his curule-chair," as M. Chalmette, our dean, used to say. (He insisted also that I much resembled the late King Louis XVIII; less strongly, however.) I supplied, further, the best of references; the most flattering recommendations from the gentlemen of the college. By return of post, the governor replied that my appearance pleased him—I believe it, *parbleu!* an antechamber in the charge of a person with a striking face like mine is a bait for the shareholder—and that I might come when I liked. I ought, you may say to me, myself also to have made my inquiries. Eh! no doubt. But I had to give so much information about myself that it never occurred to me to ask for any about them. Besides, how could a man be suspicious, seeing this admirable installation, these lofty ceilings, these great safes, as big as cupboards, and these mirrors, in which you can see yourself from head to knee? And then those sonorous prospectuses, those millions that I seemed to hear flying through the air, those colossal enterprises with their fabulous profits. I was dazzled, fascinated. It must be mentioned, too, that at the time the house did not bear quite the aspect which it has to-day. Certainly, business was already going badly—our business always has gone badly—the paper appeared only at irregular intervals. But a little *combinazione* of the governor's enabled him to save appearances.

He had conceived the idea, just imagine, of opening a patriotic subscription for the purpose of erecting a statue to General Paolo Paoli, or some such name; in any case, to a great countryman of his own. Money flowed accordingly into the Territorial. Unfortunately, that state of things did not last. By the end of a couple of months the

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statue was eaten up before it had been made, and the series of protests and writs recommenced. Nowadays I am accustomed to them. But in the days when I had just come from the country, the placards posted by authority of the courts, the Auvergnats at the door, caused me a painful impression. In the house, nobody paid attention to such things any longer. It was known that at the last moment there would always arrive a Monpavon, a Bois l'Héry, to pacify the bailiffs; for all those gentlemen, being deeply implicated in the concern, have an interest in avoiding a bankruptcy. That is the very circumstance which saves him, our wily governor. The others run after their money—we know the meaning which that expression has in gaming—and they would not like all the stock on their hands to become worthless save to sell for waste paper.

Small and great, that is the case of all of us who are connected with the firm. From the landlord, to whom two years' rent is owing and who, for fear of losing it all, allows us to stay for nothing, to us poor employees, even to me, who am involved to the extent of my seven thousand francs of savings and my four years of arrears, we are running after our money. That is the reason why I remain obstinately here.

Doubtless, in spite of my advanced age, thanks to my good appearance, to my education, to the care which I have always taken of my clothes, I might have obtained some post under other management. There is one person of excellent repute known to me, M. Joyeuse, a bookkeeper in the firm of Hemerlingue & Son, the great bankers of the Rue Saint-Honoré, who, every time he meets me, never fails to remark:

"Passajon, my friend, don't stop in that den of brigands. You are wrong to persist in remaining. You will never get a halfpenny out of them. So come to Hemerlingue's. I undertake to find some little corner for you there. You will earn less, but you will be paid much more."

I feel that he is quite right, that worthy fellow. But the thing is stronger than I. I cannot make up my mind

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to leave. And yet it is by no means gay, the life I lead here in these great, cold rooms, where no one ever comes, where each man stows himself away in a corner without speaking. What will you have? Each knows the other too well. Everything has been said already.

Again, until last year, we used to have sittings of the board of inspection, meetings of shareholders, stormy and noisy assemblies, veritable battles of savages, from which the cries could be heard to the Madeleine. Several times a week also there would call subscribers indignant at no longer ever receiving any news of their money. It was on such occasions that our governor shone. I have seen these people, monsieur, go into his office furious as wolves thirsting for blood, and, after a quarter of an hour, come out milder than sheep, satisfied, reassured, and their pockets relieved of a few bank-notes. For, there lay the acme of his cleverness; in the extraction of money from the unlucky people who came to demand it. Nowadays the shareholders of the Territorial Bank no longer give any sign of existence. I think they are all dead or else resigned to the situation. The board never meets. The sittings only take place on paper; it is I who am charged with the preparation of a so-called report—always the same—which I copy out afresh each quarter. We should never see a living soul, if, at long intervals, there did not rise from the depths of Corsica some subscribers to the statue of Paoli, curious to know how the monument is progressing; or, it may be, some worthy reader of *Financial Truth*, which died over two years ago, who calls to renew his subscription with a timid air, and begs a little more regularity, if possible, in the forwarding of the paper. There is a faith that nothing shakes. So, when one of these innocents falls among our hungry band, it is something terrible. He is surrounded, hemmed in, an attempt is made to secure his name for one of our lists, and, in case of resistance, if he wishes to subscribe neither to the Paoli monument nor to Corsican railways, these gentlemen deal him what they call—my pen blushes to write it—what they call, I say, "the drayman thrust."

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Here is what it is: We always keep at the office a parcel prepared in advance, a well-corded case which arrives nominally from the railway station while the visitor is present. "There are twenty francs carriage to pay," says the one among us who brings the thing in. (Twenty francs, sometimes thirty, according to the appearance of the patient.) Every one then begins to ransack his pockets: "Twenty francs carriage! but I haven't got it." "Nor I either. What a nuisance!" Some one runs to the cash-till. Closed. The cashier is summoned. He is out. And the gruff voice of the drayman, growing impatient in the antechamber: "Come, come, make haste." (It is generally I who play the drayman, because of the strength of my vocal organs.) What is to be done now? Return the parcel? That will vex the governor. "Gentlemen, I beg, will you permit me," ventures the innocent victim, opening his purse. "Ah, monsieur, indeed—" He hands over his twenty francs, he is ushered to the door, and, as soon as his heel is turned, we all divide the fruit of the crime, laughing like highway robbers.

Fie! M. Passajon. At your age, such a trade! Eh! *mon Dieu!* I well know it. I know that I should do myself more honour in quitting this evil place. But what! You would have me then renounce the hope of getting back anything of all I have put in here. No, it is not possible. There is urgent need on the contrary that I should remain, that I should be on the watch, always at hand, ready to profit by any windfall, if one should come. Oh, for example, I swear it upon my ribbon, upon my thirty years of academical service, if ever an affair like this of the Nabob allow me to recover my disbursements, I shall not wait another single minute. I shall quickly be off to look after my pretty little vineyard down yonder, near Monbars, cured forever of my thoughts of speculation. But, alas! that is a very chimerical hope. Exhausted, used up, known as we are upon the Paris market, with our stocks which are no longer quoted on the Bourse, our bonds which are near being waste paper, so many lies, so many debts, and the hole that grows ever deeper and deeper. (We owe at this

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moment three million five hundred thousand francs. It is not, however, those three millions that worry us. On the contrary, it is they that keep us going; but we have with the *concierge* a little bill of a hundred and twenty-five francs for postage-stamps, a month's gas bill, and other little things. That is the really terrible part of it.) And we are expected to believe that a man, a great financier like this Nabob, even though he were just arrived from the Congo, or dropped from the moon the same day, would be fool enough to put his money into a concern like this. Come! Is the thing possible? You may tell that story to the marines, my dear governor.

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IV

A DÉBUT IN SOCIETY

"M. BERNARD JANSOULET!"

The plebeian name, accentuated proudly by the liveried servants, and announced in a resounding voice, sounded in Jenkins's drawing-rooms like the clash of a cymbal, one of those gongs which, in fairy pieces at the theatre, are the prelude to fantastic apparitions. The light of the chandeliers paled, every eye sparkled at the dazzling perspective of the treasures of the Orient, of the showers of sequins and of pearls evoked by the magic syllables of that name, yesterday unknown.

He, it was he himself, the Nabob, the rich among the rich, the great Parisian curiosity, spiced by that relish of adventure which is so pleasing to the surfeited crowd. All heads turned, all conversations were interrupted; near the door there was a pushing among the guests, a crush as upon the quay of a seaport to witness the entry of a felucca laden with gold.

Jenkins himself, so hospitable, so self-possessed, who was standing in the first drawing-room receiving his guests, abruptly quitted the group of men about him and hurried to place himself at the head of the galleons bearing down upon the guest.

"You are a thousand times, a thousand times kind. Mme. Jenkins will be so glad, so proud.—Come, let me conduct you!"

And in his haste, in his vainglorious delight, he bore Jansoulet off so quickly that the latter had no time to present his companion, Paul de Géry, to whom he was giving his first entry into society. The young man welcomed this forgetfulness. He slipped away among the crowd of

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black dress-coats constantly pressed back at each new arrival, buried himself in it, seized by that wild terror which is experienced by every young man from the country at his first introduction to a Paris drawing-room, especially when he is intelligent and refined, and beneath his breastplate of linen does not wear like a coat of mail the imperturbable assurance of a boor.

All you, Parisians of Paris, who from the age of sixteen, in your first dress-coat and with opera-hat against your thigh, have been wont to air your adolescence at receptions of all kinds, you know nothing of that anguish, compounded of vanity, of timidity, of recollections of romantic readings, which keeps a young man from opening his mouth and so makes him awkward and for a whole night pins him down to one spot in a doorway, and converts him into a piece of furniture in a recess, a poor, wandering and wretched being, incapable of manifesting his existence save by an occasional change of place, dying of thirst rather than approach the buffet, and going away without having uttered a word, unless perhaps to stammer out one of those incoherent pieces of foolishness which he remembers for months, and which make him, at night, as he thinks of them, heave an "Ah!" of raging shame, with head buried in the pillow.

Paul de Géry was that martyr. Away yonder in his country home he had always lived a very retired existence with an old, pious, and gloomy aunt, up to the time when the law-student, destined in the first instance to the career in which his father had left an excellent reputation, had found himself introduced to a few judges' drawing-rooms, ancient, melancholy dwellings with faded pier-glasses, where he used to go to make a fourth at whist with venerable shadows. Jenkins's evening party was therefore a *début* for this provincial, of whom his very ignorance and his southern adaptability made immediately an observer.

From the place where he stood, he watched the curious defile of Jenkins's guests which had not yet come to an end at midnight; all the clients of the fashionable physician; the fine flower of society; a strong political and finan-

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cial element, bankers, deputies, a few artists, all the jaded people of Parisian "high life," wan-faced, with glittering eyes, saturated with arsenic like greedy mice, but with appetite insatiable for poison and for life. The drawing-room being thrown open, the vast antechamber of which the doors had been removed allowed to be seen, laden with flowers at the sides, the principal staircase of the mansion, over which swept, now shaken out to their full extent, the long trains whose silky weight seemed to give a backward pull to the undraped busts of the women in the course of that pretty ascending movement which brought them into view, little by little, till the complete flower of their splendour was reached. The couples as they gained the top seemed to be making an entry on the stage of a theatre; and that was twice true, since each person left on the last step the contracted eyebrows, the lines that marked preoccupation, the wearied air, his vexations, his sorrows, to display instead a contented face, a gay smile over the reposeful harmony of the features. The men exchanged honest shakes of the hand, exhibitions of fraternal good-feeling; the women, preoccupied with themselves, as they stood making little caracoling movements, with trembling graces, play of eyes and shoulders, murmured, without meaning anything, a few words of greeting:

"Thank you—oh, thank you! How kind you are!"

Then the couples would separate, for evening parties are no longer those gatherings of charming wits, in which feminine delicacy was wont to compel the character, the lofty knowledge, the genius, even, of men to bow graciously before it; but these overcrowded routs, in which the women, who alone are seated, chattering together like slaves in a harem, have no longer aught save the pleasure of being beautiful or appearing so. De Géry, after having wandered through the doctor's library, the conservatory, the billiard-room, where men were smoking, weary of serious and dry conversation which seemed to him out of place amid surroundings so decorated and in the brief hour of pleasure—some one had asked him carelessly, without looking at him, what the Bourse was doing that day—

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made his way again towards the door of the large drawing-room, which was barricaded by a wedged crowd of dress-coats, a sea of heads bent sideways and peering past each other, watching.

This salon was a spacious apartment richly furnished with the artistic taste which distinguished the host and hostess. There were a few old pictures on the light background of the hangings. A monumental chimneypiece, adorned by a handsome group in marble—"The Seasons," by Sébastien Ruys—around which long green stems cut in lacework or of a goffered bronze-like rigidity curved back towards the mirror as towards the limpidity of a clear lake. On the low seats, women in close groups, so close as almost to blend the delicate colours of their toilettes, forming an immense basket of living flowers, above which there floated the gleam of bare shoulders, of hair sown with diamonds that looked like drops of water on the dark women, glittering reflections on the fair, and the same heady perfume, the same confused and gentle hum, compact of vibrant warmth and intangible wings, which, in summer, caresses a garden-bed through all its flowering time. Now and then a little laugh, rising into this luminous atmosphere, a quicker inspiration in the air, which would cause aigrettes and curls to tremble, a handsome profile to stand out suddenly. Such was the aspect of the drawing-room.

A few men were present, a very small number, however, and all of them personages of note, laden with years and decorations. They were standing about near couches, leaning over the backs of chairs, with that air of condescension which men assume when speaking to children. But in the peaceful buzz of these conversations, one voice rang out piercing and brazen, that of the Nabob, who was tranquilly performing his evolutions across this social hothouse with the assurance bestowed upon him by his immense wealth, and a certain contempt for women which he had brought back from the East.

At that moment, comfortably installed on a settee, his big hands in yellow gloves crossed carelessly one over the other, he was talking with a very handsome woman, whose

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original physiognomy—much vitality coupled with severe features—stood out pale among the pretty faces about her, just as her dress, all white, classic in its folds and following closely the lines of her supple figure, contrasted with toilettes that were richer, but among which none had that air of daring simplicity. From his corner, de Géry admired the low and smooth forehead beneath its fringe of downward combed hair, the well-opened eyes, deep blue in colour, an abysmal blue, the mouth which ceased to smile only to relax its pure curve into an expression that was weary and drooping. In sum, the rather haughty mien of an exceptional being.

Somebody near him mentioned her name—Félicia Ruys. At once he understood the rare attraction of this young girl, the continuer of her father's genius, whose budding celebrity had penetrated even to the remote country district where he had lived, with the aureole of reputed beauty. While he stood gazing at her, admiring her least gestures, a little perplexed by the enigma of her handsome countenance, he heard whispers behind him.

"But see how pleasant she is with the Nabob! If the duke were to come in!"

"The Duc de Mora is coming?"

"Certainly. It is for him that the party is given; to bring about a meeting between him and Jansoulet."

"And you think that the duke and Mlle. Ruys——"

"Where have you come from? It is an intrigue known to all Paris. The affair dates from the last exhibition, for which she did a bust of him."

"And the duchess?"

"Bah! it is not her first experience of that sort. Ah! there is Mme. Jenkins going to sing."

There was a movement in the drawing-room, a more violent swaying of the crowd near the door, and conversation ceased for a moment. Paul de Géry breathed. What he had just heard had oppressed his heart. He felt himself reached, soiled, by this mud flung in handfuls over the ideal which in his own mind he had formed of that splendid adolescence, matured by the sun of Art to so penetrating

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a charm. He moved away a little, changed his place. He feared to hear again some whispered infamy. Mme. Jenkins's voice did him good, a voice that was famous in the drawing-rooms of Paris and that in spite of all its magnificence had nothing theatrical about it, but seemed an emotional utterance vibrating over unstudied sonorities. The singer, a woman of forty or forty-five, had splendid ash-blond hair, delicate, rather nerveless features, a striking expression of kindness. Still good-looking, she was dressed in the costly taste of a woman who has not given up the thought of pleasing. Indeed, she was far from having given it up. Married a dozen years ago, for a second time, to the doctor, they seemed still to be at the first months of their dual happiness. While she sang a popular Russian melody, savage and sweet like the smile of a Slav, Jenkins was ingenuously proud, without seeking to dissimulate the fact, his broad face all beaming; and she, each time that she bent her head as she regained her breath, glanced in his direction a timid, affectionate smile that flew to seek him over the unfolded music. And then, when she had finished amid an admiring and delighted murmur, it was touching to notice how discreetly she gave her husband's hand a secret squeeze, as though to secure to themselves a corner of private bliss in the midst of her great triumph. Young de Géry was feeling cheered by the spectacle of this happy couple, when quite close to him a voice murmured—it was not, however, the same voice that he had heard just before:

"You know what they say—that the Jenkinses are not married."

"How absurd!"

"I assure you. It would seem that there is a veritable Mme. Jenkins somewhere, but not the lady we know. Besides, have you noticed——"

The dialogue continued in an undertone. Mme. Jenkins advanced, bowing, smiling, while the doctor, stopping a tray that was being borne round, brought her a glass of claret with the alacrity of a mother, an impresario, a lover. Calumny, calumny, ineffaceable defilement! To

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the provincial young man, Jenkins's attentions now seemed exaggerated. He fancied that there was something affected about them, something deliberate, and, too, in the words of thanks which she addressed in a low voice to her husband he thought he could detect a timidity, a submissiveness, not consonant with the dignity of the legitimate spouse, glad and proud in an assured happiness. "But Society is a hideous affair!" said de Géry to himself, dismayed and with cold hands. The smiles around him had upon him the effect of hypocritical grimaces. He felt shame and disgust. Then suddenly revolting: "Come, it is not possible." And, as though in reply to this exclamation, behind him the scandalous tongue resumed in an easy tone: "After all, you know, I cannot vouch for its truth. I am only repeating what I have heard. But look! Baroness Hemerlingue. He gets all Paris, this Jenkins."

The baroness moved forward on the arm of the doctor, who had rushed to meet her, and appeared, despite all his control of his facial muscles, a little ill at ease and discomfited. He had thought, the good Jenkins, to profit by the opportunity afforded by his evening party to bring about a reconciliation between his friend Hemerlingue and his friend Jansoulet, who were his two most wealthy clients and embarrassed him greatly with their intestine-feud. The Nabob was perfectly willing. He bore his old chum no grudge. Their quarrel had arisen out of Hemerlingue's marriage with one of the favourites of the last Bey. "A story with a woman at the bottom of it, in short," said Jansoulet, and a story which he would have been glad to see come to an end, since his exuberant nature found every antipathy oppressive. But it seemed that the baron was not anxious for any settlement of their differences; for, notwithstanding his word passed to Jenkins, his wife arrived alone, to the Irishman's great chagrin.

She was a tall, slender, frail person, with eyebrows that suggested a bird's plumes, and a youthful intimidated manner. She was aged about thirty but looked twenty, and wore a head-dress of grasses and ears of corn drooping over very black hair peppered with diamonds. With her long lashes

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against cheeks white with that transparency of complexion which characterizes women who have long led a cloistered existence, and a little ill at ease in her Parisian clothes, she resembled less one who had formerly been a woman of the harem than a nun who, having renounced her vows, was returning into the world.

An air of piety, of extreme devoutness, in her bearing, a certain ecclesiastical trick of walking with downcast eyes, elbows close to the body, hands crossed, mannerisms which she had acquired in the very religious atmosphere in which she had lived since her conversion and her recent baptism, completed this resemblance. And you can imagine with what ardent curiosity that worldly assembly regarded this quondam odalisk turned fervent Catholic, as she advanced escorted by a man with a livid countenance like that of some spectacled sacristan, Maître le Merquier, deputy of Lyons, Hemerlingue's man of business, who accompanied the baroness whenever the baron "was somewhat indisposed," as on this evening.

At their entry into the second drawing-room, the Nabob came straight up to her, expecting to see appear in her wake the puffy face of his old comrade to whom it was agreed that he should go and offer his hand. The baroness perceived him and became still whiter. A flash as of steel shot from beneath her long lashes. Her nostrils dilated, quivered, and, as Jansoulet bowed, she quickened her step, carrying her head high and erect, and letting fall from her thin lips an Arab word which no one else could understand but of which the Nabob himself well appreciated the insult; for, as he raised his head again, his tanned face was of the colour of baked earthenware as it leaves the furnace. He stood for an instant without moving, his huge fists clinched, his mouth swollen with anger. Jenkins came up and rejoined him, and de Géry, who had followed the whole scene from a distance, saw them talking together with preoccupied air.

The thing was a failure. The reconciliation, so cunningly planned, would not take place. Hemerlingue did not desire it. If only the duke, now, did not fail to keep

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his engagement with them. This reflection was prompted by the lateness of the hour. The Wauters who was to sing the music of the Night from the *Enchanted Flute*, on her way home from her theatre, had just entered, completely muffled in her hoods of lace.

And there was still no sign of the Minister.

It was, however, a clearly understood, definitely promised arrangement. Monpavon was to call for him at the club. From time to time the good Jenkins glanced at his watch, while applauding absently the bouquet of brilliant notes which the Wauters was pouring forth from her fairy lips, a bouquet costing three thousand francs, useless, like the other expenses of the evening, if the duke did not come.

Suddenly the double doors were flung wide open:

"His excellency M. le Duc de Mora!"

A long quiver of excitement welcomed him, a respectful curiosity that ranged itself in two rows instead of the mobbing crowd that flocked on the heels of the Nabob.

None better than he knew how to bear himself in society, to walk across a drawing-room with gravity, to endow futile things with an air of seriousness, and to treat serious things lightly; that was the epitome of his attitude in life, a paradoxical distinction. Still handsome, despite his fifty-six years, with a comeliness compounded of elegance and proportion, wherein the grace of the dandy was fortified by something military about the figure and the haughtiness of the face; he wore with striking effect his black dress-coat, on which, to do honour to Jenkins, he had pinned a few of his decorations, which he was in the habit of never wearing except upon official occasions. The reflection from the linen, from the white cravat, the dull silver of the decorations, the smoothness of the thin hair now turning gray, enhanced the pallor of the features, more bloodless than all the bloodless faces that were to be seen that evening in the Irishman's house.

He led such a terrible life! Politics, play under all its forms, from the Stock Exchange to the baccarat-table, and that reputation of a man successful with women which

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had to be maintained at all costs. Oh, this man was a true client of Jenkins; and this princely visit, he owed it in good sooth to the inventor of those mysterious pills which gave that fire to his glance, to his whole being that energy so vibrating and extraordinary.

"My dear duke, permit me to——"

Monpavon, with solemn air and a great sense of his own importance, endeavoured to effect the presentation so long looked forward to; but his excellency, preoccupied, seemed not to hear, continued his progress towards the large drawing-room, borne along by one of those electric currents that break the social monotony. On his passage, and while he greeted the handsome Mme. Jenkins, the ladies bent forward a little with seductive airs, a soft laugh, concerned to please. But he noticed only one among them, Félicia, on her feet in the centre of a group of men, discussing some question as though she were in her studio, and watching the duke come towards her, while tranquilly taking her sherbet. She greeted him with perfect naturalness. Those near had discreetly retired to a little distance. There seemed to exist between them, however, notwithstanding what de Géry had overheard with regard to their presumed relations, nothing more than a quite intellectual intimacy, a playful familiarity.

"I called at your house, mademoiselle, on my way to the Bois."

"I was informed of it. You even went into the studio."

"And I saw the famous group—my group."

"Well?"

"It is very fine. The hound runs as though he were mad. The fox scampers away admirably. Only I did not quite understand. You had told me that it was our own story, yours and mine."

"Ah, there! Try. It is an apologue that I read in—You do not read Rabelais, M. le Duc?"

"My faith, no. He is too coarse."

"Ah, well, his works were the text-book of my first reading lessons. Very badly brought up, you know. Oh, exceedingly badly. My apologue, then, is taken from Rabe-

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lais. Here it is: Bacchus created a wonderful fox, impossible to capture. Vulcan, on the other hand, gave a dog of his own creation the power to catch every animal that he should pursue. 'Now,' as my author has it, 'it happened that the two met.' You see what a wild and interminable chase. It seems to me, my dear duke, that destiny has in the same way brought us together, endowed with conflicting attributes; you who have received from the gods the gift of reaching all hearts, I whose heart will never be made prisoner."

She spoke these words, looking him full in the face, almost laughing, but sheathed and erect in the white tunic which seemed to defend her person against the liberties of his thought. He, the conqueror, the irresistible, had never before met one of this audacious and headstrong breed. He brought to bear upon her, therefore, all the magnetic currents of his seductiveness, while around them the rising murmur of the *fête*, the soft laughter, the rustle of satins and the rattling of pearls formed the accompaniment to this duet of mundane passion and juvenile irony. He resumed after a minute's pause:

"But how did the gods escape from that awkward situation?"

"By turning the two runners into stone."

"Upon my word," said he, "that is a solution which I do not at all accept. I defy the gods ever to petrify my heart."

A fiery gleam shot for a moment from his eyes, extinguished immediately by the thought that people were observing them.

In effect, people were observing them intently, but no one with so much curiosity as Jenkins, who wandered round them a little way off, impatient and fidgety, as though he were annoyed with Félicia for taking private possession of the important personage of the assembly. The young girl laughingly called the duke's attention to it.

"People will say that I am monopolizing you."

She pointed out to him Monpavon waiting, standing near the Nabob who, from afar, was gazing at his excel-

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lency with the beseeching, submissive eyes of a big, good-tempered mastiff. The Minister of State then remembered the object which had brought him. He bowed to the young girl and returned to Monpavon, who was able at last to present to him "his honourable friend, M. Bernard Jansoulet." His excellency bowed slightly, the *parvenu* humbled himself lower than the earth, then they chatted for a moment.

A group curious to observe. Jansoulet, tall, strong, with an air of the people about him, a sunburned skin, his broad back arched as though made round for ever by the low bowings of Oriental courtiery, his big, short hands splitting his light gloves, his excessive gestures, his southern exuberance chopping up his words like a puncher. The other, a high-bred gentleman, a man of the world, elegance itself, easy in his least gestures, though these, however, were extremely rare, carelessly letting fall unfinished sentences, relieving by a half smile the gravity of his face, concealing beneath an imperturbable politeness the deep contempt which he had for man and woman; and it was in that contempt above all that his strength lay. In an American drawing-room the antithesis would have been less violent. The Nabob's millions would have re-established the balance and even made the scale lean to his side. But Paris does not yet place money above every other force, and to realize this, it was sufficient to observe the great contractor wriggling amiably before the great gentleman and casting under his feet, like the courtier's cloak of ermine, the dense vanity of a newly rich man.

From the corner in which he had ensconced himself, de Géry was watching the scene with interest, knowing what importance his friend attached to this introduction, when the same chance which all through the evening had so cruelly been giving the lie to the native simplicity of his inexperience, caused him to distinguish a short dialogue near him, amid that buzz of many conversations through which each hears just the word that interests him.

"It is indeed the least that Monpavon can do, to enable

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him to make a few good acquaintances. He has introduced him to so many bad ones. You know that he has just put Paganetti and all his gang on his shoulders."

"Poor fellow! But they will devour him."

"Bah! It is only fair that he should be made to disgorge a little. He has been such a thief himself away yonder among the Turks."

"Really, do you believe that is so?"

"Do I believe it? I am in possession of very precise details on the point which I have from Baron Hemerlingue, the banker, who effected the last Tunisian loan. He knows some stories about the Nabob, he does. Just imagine."

And the infamous gossip commenced. For fifteen years Jansoulet had exploited the former Bey in a scandalous fashion. Names of purveyors were cited and tricks wonderful in their assurance, their effrontery; for instance, the story of a musical frigate, yes, a veritable musical box, like a dining-room picture, which he had bought for two hundred thousand francs and sold again for ten millions; the cost price of a throne sold at three millions for which the account could be seen in the books of an upholsterer of the Faubourg Saint-Honoré did not exceed a hundred thousand francs; and the funniest part of it was that, the Bey having changed his mind, the royal seat, fallen into disgrace before it had even been unpacked, remained still nailed in its packing-case at a custom-house in Tripoli.

Next, beyond these wildly extravagant commissions on the provision of the least toy, they laid stress upon accusations more grave but no less certain, since they also sprang from the same source. It seemed there was, adjoining the seraglio, a harem of European women admirably equipped for his Highness by the Nabob, who must have been a good judge in such matters, having practised formerly, in Paris—before his departure for the East—the most singular trades: vendor of theatre-tickets, manager of a low dancing-hall, and of an establishment more ill-famed still. And the whispering ended in a smothered laugh, the coarse laugh of men chatting among themselves.

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The first impulse of the young man from the country, as he heard these infamous calumnies, was to turn round and exclaim:

"You lie!"

A few hours earlier he would have done it without hesitating; but, since he had been there, he had learned distrust, scepticism. He contained himself, therefore, and listened to the end, motionless in the same place, having deep down within himself an unavowed desire to become further acquainted with the man whose service he had entered. As for the Nabob, the completely unconscious subject of this hideous recital, tranquilly installed in a small room to which its blue hangings and two shaded lamps gave a reposeful air, he was playing his game of *écarté* with the Duc de Mora.

O magic of Fortune's argosy! The son of the dealer in old iron seated alone at a card-table opposite the first personage of the Empire! Jansoulet could scarcely believe the Venetian mirror in which were reflected his own bright countenance and the august head with its parting down the middle. Accordingly, in order to show his appreciation of this great honour, he sought to lose decently as many thousand-franc notes as possible, feeling himself even so the winner of the game, and quite proud to see his money pass into those aristocratic hands, whose least gesture he studied as they dealt, cut, or held the cards.

A circle had formed around them, always keeping a distance, however, the ten paces exacted for the salutation of a prince; it was the public there to witness this triumph in which the Nabob was bearing his part as in a dream, intoxicated by those fairy harmonies rather faint in the distance, those songs that reached him in snatches as over the resonant obstacle of a pool, the perfume of flowers that seem to become full blown in so singular fashion towards the end of Parisian balls, when the late hour that confuses all notions of time and the weariness of the sleepless nights communicate to brains soothed in a more nervous atmosphere, as it were, a dizzy sense of enjoyment. The robust nature

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of Jansoulet, civilized savage that he was, was more sensitive than another to these unknown subtleties, and he had need of all his strength to refrain from manifesting by some glad hurrah, by some untimely effusion of gestures and speech, the impulse of physical gaiety which pervaded his whole being, as happens to those great mountain dogs that are thrown into epileptic fits of madness by the inhaling of a drop of some essence.

"The sky is clear, the pavement dry. If you like, my dear boy, we will send the carriage away and return on foot," said Jansoulet to his companion as they left Jenkins's house.

De Géry accepted with eagerness. He felt that he required to walk, to shake off in the open air the infamies and the lies of that comedy of society which had left his heart cold and oppressed, with all his life-blood driven to his temples where he could hear the swollen veins beating. He staggered as he walked, like those unfortunate persons who, having been operated upon for cataract, in the terror of sight regained, do not dare put one foot before the other. But with what a brutal hand the operation had been performed! So that great artist with the glorious name, that pure and untamed beauty the sight alone of whom had troubled him like an apparition, was only a courtesan. Mme. Jenkins, that stately woman, of bearing at once so proud and so gentle, had no real title to the name. That illustrious man of science with the open countenance, and a manner so pleasant in his welcome, had the impudence thus to parade a disgraceful concubinage. And Paris suspected it, but that did not prevent it from running to their parties. And, finally, Jansoulet, so kind, so generous, for whom he felt in his heart so much gratitude, he knew him to be fallen into the hands of a gang of brigands, a brigand himself and well worthy of the conspiracy organized to cause him to disgorge his millions.

Was it possible, and how much of it was he to be obliged to believe?

A glance which he threw sideways at the Nabob, whose immense person almost blocked the pavement, revealed to

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him suddenly in that walk oppressed by the weight of his wealth, a something low and vulgar which he had not previously remarked. Yes, he was indeed the adventurer from the south, moulded of the slimy clay that covers the quays of Marseilles, trodden down by all the nomads and wanderers of a seaport. Kind, generous, forsooth! as harlots are, or thieves. And the gold, flowing in torrents through that tainted and luxurious world, splashing the very walls, seemed to him now to be loaded with all the dross, all the filth of its impure and muddy source. There remained, then, for him, de Géry, but one thing to do, to go away, to quit with all possible speed this situation in which he risked the compromising of his good name, the one heritage from his father. Doubtless. But the two little brothers down yonder in the country. Who would pay for their board and lodging? Who would keep up the modest home miraculously brought into being once more by the handsome salary of the eldest son, the head of the family? Those words, 'head of the family,' plunged him immediately into one of those internal combats in which interest and conscience struggled for the mastery—the one brutal, substantial, attacking vigorously with straight thrusts, the other elusive, breaking away by subtle disengagements—while the worthy Jansoulet, unconscious cause of the conflict, walked with long strides close by his young friend, inhaling the fresh air with delight at the end of his lighted cigar.

Never had he felt it such a happiness to be alive; and this evening party at Jenkins's, which had been his own first real entry into society as well as de Géry's, had left with him an impression of porticoes erected as for a triumph, of an eagerly assembled crowd, of flowers thrown on his path. So true is it that things only exist through the eyes that observe them. What a success! the duke, as he took leave of him inviting him to come to see his picture gallery, which meant the doors of Mora House opened to him within a week. Félicia Ruys consenting to do his bust, so that at the next exhibition the son of the nail-dealer would have his portrait in marble by the same great artist who had signed

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that of the Minister of State. Was it not the satisfaction of all his childish vanities?

And each pondering his own thoughts, sombre or glad, they continued to walk shoulder to shoulder, absorbed and so absent in mind that the Place Vendôme, silent and bathed in a blue and chilly light, rang under their steps before a word had been uttered between them.

"Already?" said the Nabob. "I should not at all have minded walking a little longer. What do you say?" And while they strolled two or three times around the square, he gave vent in spasmodic bursts to the immense joy which filled him.

"How pleasant the air is! How one can breathe! Thunder of God! I would not have missed this evening's party for a hundred thousand francs. What a worthy soul that Jenkins is! Do you like Félicia Ruys's style of beauty? For my part, I dote on it. And the duke, what a great gentleman! so simple, so kind. A fine place, Paris, is it not, my son?"

"It is too complicated for me. It frightens me," answered Paul de Géry in a hollow voice.

"Yes, yes, I understand," replied the other with an adorable fatuity. "You are not yet accustomed to it; but, never mind, one quickly becomes so. See how after a single month I find myself at my ease."

"That is because it is not your first visit to Paris. You had lived here."

"I? Never in my life. Who told you that?"

"Indeed! I thought—" answered the young man; and immediately, a host of reflections crowding into his mind:

"What, then, have you one to this Baron Hemerlingue? It is a hatred to the death between you."

For a moment the Nabob was taken aback. That name of Hemerlingue, thrown suddenly into his glee, recalled to him the one annoying episode of the evening.

"To him as to the others," said he in a saddened voice, "I have never done anything save good. We began together in poverty. We made progress and prospered side by side. Whenever he wished to try a flight on his own

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wings, I always aided and supported him to the best of my ability. It was I who during ten consecutive years secured for him the contracts for the fleet and the army; almost his whole fortune came from that source. Then one fine morning this slow-blooded imbecile of a Bernese goes crazy over an odalisk whom the mother of the Bey had caused to be expelled from the harem. The hussy was beautiful and ambitious, she made him marry her, and naturally, after this brilliant match, Hemerlingue was obliged to leave Tunis. Somebody had persuaded him to believe that I was urging the Bey to close the principality to him. It was not true. On the contrary, I obtained from his Highness permission for Hemerlingue's son—a child by his first wife—to remain in Tunis in order to look after their suspended interests, while the father came to Paris to found his banking-house. Moreover, I have been well rewarded for my kindness. When, at the death of my poor Ahmed, the Mouchir, his brother, ascended the throne, the Hemerlingues, restored to favour, never ceased to work for my undoing with the new master. The Bey still keeps on good terms with me; but my credit is shaken. Well, in spite of that, in spite of all the shabby tricks that Hemerlingue has played me, that he plays me still, I was ready this evening to hold out my hand to him. Not only does the blackguard refuse it, but he causes me to be insulted by his wife, a savage and evil-disposed creature, who does not pardon me for always having declined to receive her in Tunis. Do you know what she called me just now as she passed me? 'Thief and son of a dog.' As free in her language as that, the odalisk— That is to say, that if I did not know my Hemerlingue to be as cowardly as he is fat— After all, bah! let them say what they like. I snap my fingers at them. What can they do against me? Ruin me with the Bey? That is a matter of indifference to me. There is nothing any longer for me to do in Tunis, and I shall withdraw myself from the place altogether as soon as possible. There is only one town, one country in the world, and that is Paris—Paris welcoming, hospitable, not prudish, where every intelligent man may find space to do great things. And I,

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now, do you see, de Géry, I want to do great things. I have had enough of mercantile life. For twenty years I have worked for money; to-day I am greedy of glory, of consideration, of fame. I want to be somebody in the history of my country, and that will be easy for me. With my immense fortune, my knowledge of men and of affairs, the things I know I have here in my head, nothing is beyond my reach and I aspire to everything. Believe me, therefore, my dear boy, never leave me"—one would have said that he was replying to the secret thought of his young companion—"remain faithfully on board my ship. The masts are firm; I have my bunkers full of coal. I swear to you that we shall go far, and quickly, *nom d'un sort!*"

The ingenuous southerner thus poured out his projects into the night with many expressive gestures, and from time to time, as they walked rapidly to and fro in the vast and deserted square, majestically surrounded by its silent and closed palaces, he raised his head towards the man of bronze on the column, as though taking to witness that great upstart whose presence in the midst of Paris authorizes all ambitions, endows every chimera with probability.

There is in young people a warmth of heart, a need of enthusiasm which is awakened by the least touch. As the Nabob talked, de Géry felt his suspicion take wing and all his sympathy return, together with a shade of pity. No, very certainly this man was not a rascal, but a poor, illuded being whose fortune had gone to his head like a wine too heavy for a stomach long accustomed to water. Alone in the midst of Paris, surrounded by enemies and people ready to take advantage of him, Jansoulet made upon him the impression of a man on foot laden with gold passing through some evil-haunted wood, in the dark and unarmed. And he reflected that it would be well for the *protégé* to watch, without seeming to do so, over the protector, to become the discerning Telemachus of the blind Mentor, to point out to him the quagmires, to defend him against the highwaymen, to aid him, in a word, in his combats amid all that swarm of nocturnal ambuscades which he felt were prowling ferociously around the Nabob and his millions.

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V

THE JOYEUSE FAMILY

EVERY morning of the year, at exactly eight o'clock, a new and almost tenantless house in a remote quarter of Paris, echoed to cries, calls, merry laughter, ringing clear in the desert of the staircase:

"Father, don't forget my music."

"Father, my crochet wool."

"Father, bring us some rolls."

And the voice of the father calling from below:

"Yaia, bring me down my portfolio, please."

"There you are, you see! He has forgotten his portfolio."

And there would be a glad scurry from top to bottom of the house, a running of all those pretty faces confused by sleep, of all those heads with disordered hair which the owners made tidy as they ran, until the moment when, leaning over the baluster, half a dozen girls bade loud good-bye to a little, old gentleman, neat and well-groomed, whose reddish face and short profile disappeared at length in the spiral perspective of the stairs. M. Joyeuse had departed for his office. At once the whole band, escaped from their cage, would rush quickly upstairs again to the fourth floor, and, the door having been opened, group themselves at an open casement to gain one last glimpse of their father. The little man used to turn round, kisses were exchanged across the distance, then the windows were closed, the new and tenantless house became quiet again, except for the posters dancing their wild saraband in the wind of the unfinished street, as if made gay, they also, by all these proceedings. A moment later the photographer on the fifth floor would descend to hang at the

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door his showcase, always the same, in which was to be seen the old gentleman in a white tie surrounded by his daughters in various groups; he went upstairs again in his turn, and the calm which succeeded immediately upon this little morning uproar left one to imagine that the "father" and his young ladies had re-entered the case of photographs, where they remained smiling and motionless until evening.

From the Rue Saint-Ferdinand to the establishment of Hemerlingue & Son, his employers, M. Joyeuse had a good three-quarters of an hour's journey. He walked with head erect and straight, as though he had feared to disarrange the smart knot of the cravat tied by his daughters, or his hat put on by them, and when the eldest, ever anxious and prudent, just as he went out raised his coat-collar to protect him against the harsh gusts of the wind that blew round the street corner, even if the temperature were that of a hothouse M. Joyeuse would not lower it again until he reached the office, like the lover who, quitting his mistress's arms, dares not to move for fear of losing the intoxicating perfume.

A widower for some years, this worthy man lived only for his children, thought only of them, went through life surrounded by those fair little heads that fluttered around him confusedly as in a picture of the Assumption. All his desires, all his projects, bore reference to "those young ladies," returned to them without ceasing, sometimes after long circuits, for M. Joyeuse—this was connected no doubt with the fact that he possessed a short neck and a small figure whereof his turbulent blood made the circuit in a moment—was a man of fecund and astonishing imagination. In his brain the ideas performed their evolutions with the rapidity of hollow straws around a sieve. At the office, figures kept his steady attention by reason of their positive quality; but, outside, his mind took its revenge upon that inexorable occupation. The activity of the walk, the habit that led him by a route where he was familiar with the least incidents, allowed full liberty to his imaginative faculties. He invented at these times extraordinary

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adventures, enough of them to prank out a score of the serial stories that appear in the newspapers.

If, for example, M. Joyeuse, as he went up the Faubourg Saint-Honoré, on the right-hand footwalk—he always took that one—noticed a heavy laundry-cart going along at a quick pace, driven by a woman from the country with a child perched on a bundle of linen and leaning over somewhat:

"The child!" the terrified old fellow would cry. "Have a care of the child!"

His voice would be lost in the noise of the wheels and his warning among the secrets of Providence. The cart passed. He would follow it for a moment with his eye, then resume his walk; but the drama begun in his mind would continue to unfold itself there, with a thousand catastrophes. The child had fallen. The wheels were about to pass over him. M. Joyeuse dashed forward, saved the little creature on the very brink of destruction; the pole of the cart, however, struck himself full in the chest and he fell bathed in blood. Then he would see himself borne to some chemists' shop through the crowd that had collected. He was placed in an ambulance, carried to his own house, and then suddenly he would hear the piercing cry of his daughters, his well-beloved daughters, when they beheld him in this condition. And that agonized cry touched his heart so deeply, he would hear it so distinctly, so realistically: "Papa, my dear papa," that he would himself utter it aloud in the street, to the great astonishment of the passers-by, in a hoarse voice which would wake him from his fictitious nightmare.

Will you have another sample of this prodigious imagination? It is raining, freezing; wretched weather. M. Joyeuse has taken the omnibus to go to his office. Finding himself seated opposite a sort of colossus, with the head of a brute and formidable biceps, M. Joyeuse, himself very small, very puny, with his portfolio on his knees, draws in his legs in order to make room for the enormous columns which support the monumental body of his neighbour. As the vehicle moves on and as the rain beats on

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the windows, M. Joyeuse falls into reverie. And suddenly the colossus opposite, whose face is kind after all, is very much surprised to see the little man change colour, look at him and grind his teeth, look at him with ferocious eyes, an assassin's eyes. Yes, with the eyes of a veritable assassin, for at that moment M. Joyeuse is dreaming a terrible dream. He sees one of his daughters sitting there opposite him, by the side of this giant brute, and the wretch has put his arm round her waist under her cape.

"Remove your hand, sir!" M. Joyeuse has already said twice over. The other has only sneered. Now he wishes to kiss Élise.

"Ah, rascal!"

Too feeble to defend his daughter, M. Joyeuse, foaming with rage, draws his knife from his pocket, stabs the insolent fellow full in the breast, and with head high goes off, strong in the right of an outraged father, to make his declaration at the nearest police-station.

"I have just killed a man in an omnibus!" At the sound of his own voice actually uttering these sinister words, but not in the police-station, the poor fellow wakes up, guesses from the bewildered manner of the passengers that he must have spoken the words aloud, and very quickly takes advantage of the conductor's call, "Saint-Philippe—Panthéon—Bastille—" to alight, feeling greatly confused, amid general stupefaction.

This imagination constantly on the stretch, gave to M. Joyeuse a singular physiognomy, feverish and worn, in strong contrast with the general correct appearance of a subordinate clerk which he presented. In one day he lived so many passionate existences. The race is more numerous than one thinks of these waking dreamers, in whom a too restricted fate compresses forces unemployed and heroic faculties. Dreaming is the safety-valve through which all those expend themselves with terrible ebullitions, as of the vapour of a furnace and floating images that are forthwith dissipated into air. From these visions some return radiant, others exhausted and discouraged, as they find themselves once more on the every-day level. M. Joyeuse

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was of these latter, rising without ceasing to heights whence a man cannot but re-descend, somewhat bruised by the velocity of the transit.

Now, one morning that our "visionary" had left his house at his habitual hour, and under the usual circumstances, he began at the turning of the Rue Saint-Ferdinand one of his little private romances. As the end of the year was at hand, perhaps it was the hammer-strokes on a wooden hut which was being erected in the neighbouring timber-yard that caused his thoughts to turn to "presents—New Year's Day." And immediately the word bounty implanted itself in his mind as the first landmark of a marvellous story. In the month of December all persons in Hemerlingue's service received double pay, and you know that in small households there are founded on windfalls of this kind a thousand projects, ambitious or kind, presents to be made, a piece of furniture to be replaced, a little sum of money to be saved in a drawer against the unforeseen.

In simple fact, M. Joyeuse was not rich. His wife, a Mlle. de Saint-Amand, tormented with ideas of greatness and society, had set this little clerk's household on a ruinous footing, and though since her death three years had passed during which Bonne Maman had managed the housekeeping with so much wisdom, they had not yet been able to save anything, so heavy had proved the burden of the past. Suddenly it occurred to the good fellow that this year the bounty would be larger by reason of the increase of work which had been caused by the Tunisian loan. The loan constituted a very fine stroke of business for the firm, too fine even, for M. Joyeuse had permitted himself to remark in the office that this time "Hemerlingue & Son had shaved the Turk a little too close."

"Certainly, yes, the bounty will be doubled," reflected the visionary, as he walked; and already he saw himself, a month thence, mounting with his comrades, for the New Year's visit, the little staircase that led to Hemerlingue's apartment. He announced the good news to them; then he detained M. Joyeuse for a few words in private. And, behold, that master habitually so cold in his manner,

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sheathed in his yellow fat as in a bale of raw silk, became affectionate, paternal, communicative. He desired to know how many daughters Joyeuse had.

"I have three; no, I should say, four, M. le Baron. I always confuse them. The eldest is such a sensible girl."

Further he wished to know their ages.

"Aline is twenty, M. le Baron. She is the eldest. Then we have Élise, who is preparing for the examination which she must pass when she is eighteen. Henriette, who is fourteen, and Zaza or Yaia who is only twelve."

That pet name of Yaia intensely amused M. le Baron, who inquired next what were the resources of this interesting family.

"My salary, M. le Baron; none else. I had a little money put aside, but my poor wife's illness, the education of the girls——"

"What you are earning is not sufficient, my dear Joyeuse. I raise your salary to a thousand francs a month."

"Oh, M. le Baron, it is too much."

But although he had uttered this last sentence aloud, in the ear of a policeman who watched with a mistrustful eye the little man pass, gesticulating and nodding his head, the poor visionary awoke not. With admiration he saw himself returning home, announcing the news to his daughters, taking them to the theatre in the evening in celebration of the happy day. *Dieu!* how pretty they looked in the front of their box, the Demoiselles Joyeuse, what a bouquet of rosy faces! And then, the next day, the two eldest asked in marriage by— Impossible to determine by whom, for M. Joyeuse had just suddenly found himself once more beneath the arch of the Hemerlingue establishment, before the swing-door surmounted by a "counting-house" in letters of gold.

"I shall always be the same, it seems," said he to himself, laughing a little and passing his hand over his forehead, on which the perspiration stood in drops.

In a good humour as the result of his pleasant fancy and at the sight of the fire crackling in the suite of parquet-floored offices, with their screens of iron trellis-work and

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their air of secrecy in the cold light of the ground floor, where one could count the pieces of gold without dazzling his eyes, M. Joyeuse gave a gay greeting to the other clerks and slipped on his working coat and his black velvet cap. Suddenly, some one whistled from upstairs, and the cashier, applying his ear to the tube, heard the oily and gelatinous voice of Hemerlingue, the sole and veritable Hemerlingue —the other, the son, was always absent—asking for M. Joyeuse.

What! Could the dream be continuing?

He was conscious of a great agitation; took the little inside staircase which he had seen himself ascending just before so bravely, and found himself in the banker's private room, a narrow apartment, with a very high ceiling, furnished only with green curtains and enormous leather easy chairs of a size proportioned to the terrific bulk of the head of the house. He was there, seated at his desk which his belly prevented him from approaching very closely, obese, ill-shaped, and so yellow that his round face with its hooked nose, the head of a fat and sick owl, suggested as it were a light at the end of the solemn and gloomy room. A rich Moorish merchant grown mouldy in the damp of his little court-yard. Beneath his heavy eyelids, raised with an effort, his glance glittered for a second when the accountant entered; he signed to him to approach, and slowly, coldly, pausing to take breath between his sentences, instead of "M. Joyeuse, how many daughters have you?" he said this:

"Joyeuse, you have allowed yourself to criticise in the office our last operations in the Tunis market. Useless to defend yourself. Your remarks have been reported to me word for word. And as I am unable to admit them from the mouth of one in my service, I give you notice that dating from the end of this month you cease to be a member of my establishment."

A wave of blood mounted to the accountant's face, fell back, returned again, bringing each time a confused whizzing into his ears, into his brain a tumult of thoughts and images.

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His daughters!

What was to become of them?

Employment is so hard to find at that period of the year.

Poverty appeared before his eyes and also the vision of an unfortunate man falling at Hemerlingue's feet, supplicating him, threatening him, springing at his throat in an access of despairing rage. All this agitation passed over his features like a gust of wind which throws the surface of a lake into ripples, fashioning there all manner of mobile whirlpools; but he remained mute, standing in the same place, and upon the master's intimation that he could withdraw, went down with tottering step to resume his work in the counting-house.

In the evening when he went home to the Rue Saint-Ferdinand, M. Joyeuse told his daughters nothing. He did not dare. The idea of darkening that radiant gaiety which was the life of the house, of making dull with heavy tears those pretty bright eyes, was insupportable to him. Timorous, too, and weak, he was of those who always say, "Let us wait till to-morrow." He waited therefore before speaking, at first until the month of November should be ended, deluding himself with the vague hope that Hemerlingue might change his mind, as though he did not know that will as of some mollusk flabby and tenacious upon its ingot of gold. Then when his salary had been paid up and another accountant had taken his place before the high desk at which he had stood for so long, he hoped to find something else quickly and repair his misfortune before being obliged to confess it.

Every morning he feigned to start for the office, allowed himself to be equipped and accompanied to the door as usual, his huge leather portfolio all ready for the evening's numerous commissions. Although he would forget some of them on purpose because of the approaching and so problematical end of the month, he did not lack time now to execute them. He had his day to himself, the whole of an interminable day which he spent in rushing about Paris in the search for an employment. People gave him addresses, excellent recommendations. But in that ter-

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rible month of December, so cold and with such short hours of daylight, bringing with it so many expenses and preoccupations, employees need to take patience and employers also. Each man tries to end the year in peace, postponing to the month of January, to that great leap of time towards a fresh halting-place, any changes, ameliorations, attempts at a new life.

In every house where M. Joyeuse presented himself, he beheld faces suddenly grow cold as soon as he explained the object of his visit.

"What! You are no longer with Hemerlingue & Son? How is that?"

He would explain the matter as best he could through a caprice of the head of the firm, the ferocious Hemerlingue whom Paris knew; but he was conscious of a coldness, a mistrust in the uniform reply which he received: "Call on us again after the holidays." And, timid as he was to begin with, he reached a point at which he could no longer bring himself to call on any one, a point at which he would walk past the same door a score of times and never have crossed its threshold at all had it not been for the thought of his daughters. This alone pushed him along by the shoulders, put heart in his legs, despatched him in the course of the same day to the opposite extremities of Paris, to very vague addresses given to him by comrades, to a great manufactory of animal black at Aubervilliers, where he was made to return for nothing three days in succession.

Oh, the journeys in the rain, in the frost, the closed doors, the master who is out or engaged, the promises given and immediately withdrawn, the hopes deceived, the enervation of hours of waiting, the humiliations reserved for every man who asks for work, as though it were a shameful thing to lack it. M. Joyeuse knew all these melancholy things and, too, the good will that tires and grows discouraged before the persistence of evil fortune. And you may imagine how the hard martyrdom of "the man who seeks a place" was rendered tenfold more bitter by the mirages of his imagination, by those chimeras which

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rose before him from the Paris pavements as over them he journeyed along on foot in every direction.

For a month he was one of those woeful puppets, talking in monologue, gesticulating on the footways, from whom every chance collision with the crowd wrests an exclamation as of one walking in his sleep. "I told you so," or "I have no doubt of it, sir." One passes by, almost one would laugh, but one is seized with pity before the unconsciousness of those unhappy men possessed by a fixed idea, blind whom the dream leads, drawn along by an invisible leash. The terrible thing was that after those long, cruel days of inaction and fatigue, when M. Joyeuse returned home, he had perforce to play the comedy of the man returning from his work, to recount the incidents of the day, the things he had heard, the gossip of the office with which he had been always wont to entertain his girls.

In humble homes there is always a name which comes up more often than all others, which is invoked in days of stress, which is mingled with every wish, with every hope, even with the games of the children, penetrated as they are with its importance, a name which sustains in the dwelling the part of a sub-Providence, or rather of a household divinity, familiar and supernatural. In the Joyeuse family, it was Hemerlingue, always Hemerlingue, returning ten times, twenty times a day in the conversation of the girls, who associated it with all their plans, with the most intimate details of their feminine ambitions. "If Hemerlingue would only——" "All that depends on Hemerlingue." And nothing could be more charming than the familiarity with which these young people spoke of that enormously wealthy man whom they had never seen.

They would ask for news of him. Had their father spoken to him? Was he in a good temper? And to think that we all of us, whatever our position, however humble we be, however weighed down by fate, we have always beneath us unfortunate beings more humble, yet more weighed down, for whom we are great, for whom we are as gods, and in our quality of gods, indifferent, disdainful, or cruel.

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One imagines the torture of M. Joyeuse, obliged to invent stories and anecdotes about the wretch who had so ruthlessly discharged him after ten years of good service. He played his little comedy, however, so well as completely to deceive everybody. Only one thing had been remarked, and that was that father when he came home in the evening always sat down to table with a great appetite. I believe it! Since he lost his place the poor man had gone without his luncheon.

The days passed. M. Joyeuse found nothing. Yes, one place as accountant in the Territorial Bank, which he refused, however, knowing too much about banking operations, about all the corners and innermost recesses of the financial Bohemia in general, and of the Territorial Bank in particular, to set foot in that den.

"But," said Passajon to him—for it was Passajon who, meeting the honest fellow and hearing that he was out of employment, had suggested to him that he should come to Paganetti's—"but since I repeat that it is serious. We have lots of money. They pay one. I have been paid. See how prosperous I look."

In effect, the old office porter had a new livery, and beneath his tunic with its buttons of silver-gilt his paunch protruded, majestic. All the same M. Joyeuse had not allowed himself to be tempted, even after Passajon, opening wide his shallow-set blue eyes, had whispered into his ear with emphasis these words rich in promises:

"The Nabob is in the concern."

Even after that, M. Joyeuse had had the courage to say No. Was it not better to die of hunger than to enter a fraudulent house of which he might perhaps one day be summoned to report upon the books in the courts?

So he continued to wander; but, discouraged, he no longer sought employ. As it was necessary that he should absent himself from home, he used to linger over the stalls on the quays, lean for hours on the parapets, watch the water flow and the unladening of the vessels. He became one of those idlers whom one sees in the first rank whenever a crowd collects in the street, taking shelter from

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the rain under porches, warming himself at the stoves where, in the open air, the tar of the asphalters reeks, sinking on a bench of some boulevard when his legs could no longer carry him.

To do nothing! What a fine way of making life seem longer!

On certain days, however, when M. Joyeuse was too weary or the sky too unkind, he would wait at the end of the street until his daughters should have closed their window again and, returning to the house, keeping close to the walls, would mount the staircase very quickly, pass before his own door holding his breath, and take refuge in the apartment of the photographer André Maranne, who, aware of his ill-fortune, always gave him that kindly welcome which the poor have for each other. Clients are rare so near the outskirts of the town. He used to remain long hours in the studio, talking in a very low voice, reading at his friend's side, listening to the rain on the window-panes or the wind that blew as it does on the open sea, shaking the old doors and the window-sashes below in the wood-sheds. Beneath him he could hear sounds well known and full of charm, songs that escaped in the satisfaction of work accomplished, assembled laughter, the pianoforte lesson being given by Bonne Maman, the tic-tac of the metronome, all the delicious household stir that pleased his heart. He lived with his darlings, who certainly never could have guessed that they had him so near them.

Once, while Maranne was out, M. Joyeuse keeping faithful watch over the studio and its new apparatus, heard two little strokes given on the ceiling of the apartment below, two separate, very distinct strokes, then a cautious pattering of fingers, like the scamper of mice. The friendliness of the photographer with his neighbours sufficiently authorized these communications like those of prisoners. But what did they mean? How reply to what seemed a call? Quite at hazard, he repeated the two strokes, the light tapping, and the conversation ended there. On the return of André Maranne he learned the explanation of the incident. It was very simple. Sometimes, in the course of the day, the

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young ladies below, who only saw their neighbour in the evening, would inquire how things were going with him, whether any clients were coming in. The signal he had heard meant, "Is business good to-day?" And M. Joyeuse had replied, obeying only an instinct without any knowledge, "Fairly well for the season." Although young Maranne was very red as he made this affirmation, M. Joyeuse accepted his word at once. Only this idea of frequent communications between the two households made him afraid for the secrecy of his position, and from that time forward he cut himself off from what he used to call his "artistic days." Moreover, the moment was approaching when he would no longer be able to conceal his misfortune, the end of the month arriving, complicated by the ending of the year.

Paris was already assuming the holiday appearance which it wears during the last weeks of December. In the way of national or popular rejoicing it has little left but that. The follies of the Carnival died with Gavarni, the religious festivals with their peals of bells which one scarcely hears amid the noise of the streets confine themselves within their heavy church-doors, the 15th of August has never been anything but the Saint Charles-the-Great of the barracks; but Paris has maintained its observance of New Year's Day.

From the beginning of December an immense childishness begins to permeate the town. You see hand-carts pass laden with gilded drums, wooden horses, playthings by the dozen. In the industrial quarters, from top to bottom of the five-storied houses, the old private residences still standing in that low-lying district, where the warehouses have such lofty ceilings and majestic double doors, the nights are passed in the making up of gauze flowers and spangles, in the gumming of labels upon satin-lined boxes, in sorting, marking, packing, the thousand details of the toy, that great branch of commerce on which Paris places the seal of its elegance. There is a smell about of new wood, of fresh paint, glossy varnish, and, in the dust of garrets, on the wretched stairways where the poor leave

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behind them all the dirt through which they have passed, there lie shavings of rosewood, scraps of satin and velvet, bits of tinsel, all the *débris* of the luxury whose end is to dazzle the eyes of children. Then the shop-windows are decorated. Behind the panes of clear glass the gilt of presentation-books rises like a glittering wave under the gaslight, the stuffs of various and tempting colours display their brittle and heavy folds, while the young ladies behind the counter, with their hair dressed tapering to a point and with a ribbon beneath their collar, tie up the article, little finger in air, or fill bags of moire into which the sweets fall like a rain of pearls.

But, over against this kind of well-to-do business, established in its own house, warmed, withdrawn behind its rich shop-front, there is installed the improvised commerce of those wooden huts, open to the wind of the streets, of which the double row gives to the boulevards the aspect of some foreign mall. It is in these that you find the true interest and the poetry of New Year's gifts. Sumptuous in the district of the Madeleine, well-to-do towards the Boulevard Saint-Denis, of more "popular" order as you ascend to the Bastille, these little sheds adapt themselves according to their public, calculate their chances of success by the more or less well-lined purses of the passers-by. Among these, there are set up portable tables, laden with trifling objects, miracles of the Parisian trade that deals in such small things, constructed out of nothing, frail and delicate, and which the wind of fashion sometimes sweeps forward in its great rush by reason of their very triviality. Finally, along the curbs of the footways, lost in the defile of the carriage traffic which grazes their wandering path, the orange-girls complete this peripatetic commerce, heaping up the sun-coloured fruit beneath their lanterns of red paper, crying "La Valence" amid the fog, the tumult, the excessive haste which Paris displays at the ending of its year.

Ordinarily, M. Joyeuse was accustomed to make one of the busy crowd which goes and comes with the jingle of money in its pocket and parcels in every hand. He would

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wander about with Bonne Maman at his side on the lookout for New Year's presents for his girls, stop before the booths of the small dealers, who are unaccustomed to do much business and excited by the appearance of the least important customer, have based upon this short season hopes of extraordinary profits. And there would be colloquies, reflections, an interminable perplexity to know what to select in that little complex brain of his, always ahead of the present instant and of the occupation of the moment.

This year, alas! nothing of that kind. He wandered sadly through the town in its rejoicing, time seeming to hang all the heavier for the activity around him, jostled, hustled, as all are who stand obstructing the way of active folk, his heart beating with a perpetual fear, for Bonne Maman for some days past, in conversation with him at table, had been making significant allusions with regard to the New Year's presents. Consequently he avoided finding himself alone with her and had forbidden her to come to meet him at the office at closing-time. But in spite of all his efforts he knew the moment was drawing near when concealment would be impossible and his grievous secret be unveiled. Was, then, a very formidable person, Bonne Maman, that M. Joyeuse should stand in such fear of her? By no means. A little stern, that was all, with a pretty smile that instantly forgave one. But M. Joyeuse was a coward, timid from his birth; twenty years of housekeeping with a masterful wife, "a member of the nobility," having made him a slave for ever, like those convicts who, after their imprisonment is over, have to undergo a period of surveillance. And for him this meant all his life.

One evening the Joyeuse family was gathered in the little drawing-room, last relic of its splendour, still containing two upholstered chairs, many crochet decorations, a piano, two lamps crowned with little green shades, and a what-not covered with bric-à-brac.

True family life exists in humble homes.

For the sake of economy, there was lighted for the whole household but one fire and a single lamp, around which the occupations and amusements of all were

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grouped. A fine big family lamp, whose old painted shade —night scenes pierced with shining dots—had been the astonishment and the joy of every one of those young girls in her early childhood. Issuing softly from the shadow of the room, four young heads were bent forward, fair or dark, smiling or intent, into that intimate and warm circle of light which illumined them as far as the eyes, seemed to feed the fire of their glance, to shelter them, protect them, preserve them from the black cold blowing outside, from phantoms, from snares, from miseries and terrors, from all the sinister things that a winter night in Paris brings forth in the remoteness of its quiet suburbs.

Thus, drawn close together in a small room at the top of the lonely house, in the warmth, the security of their comfortable home, the Joyeuse household seems like a nest right at the top of a lofty tree. The girls sew, read, chat a little. A leap of the lamp-flame, a crackling of fire, is what you may hear, with from time to time an exclamation from M. Joyeuse, a little removed from his small circle, lost in the shadow where he hides his anxious brow and all the extravagance of his imagination. Just now he is imagining that in the distress into which he finds himself driven beyond possibility of escape, in that absolute necessity of confessing everything to his children, this evening, at latest to-morrow, an unhoped-for succour may come to him. Hemerlingue, seized with remorse, sends to him, as to all those who took part in the work connected with the Tunis loan, his December gratuity. A tall footman brings it: "On behalf of M. le Baron." The visionary says those words aloud. The pretty faces turn towards him; the girls laugh, move their chairs, and the poor fellow awakes suddenly to reality.

Oh, how angry he is with himself now for his delay in confessing all, for that false security which he has maintained around him and which he will have to destroy at a blow. What need had he, too, to criticise that Tunis loan? At this moment he even reproaches himself for not having accepted a place in the Territorial Bank. Had he the right to refuse? Ah, the sorry head of a family, without strength to keep or to defend the happiness of his own!

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And, glancing at the pretty group within the circle of the lamp-shade, whose reposeful aspect forms so great a contrast with his own internal agitation, he is seized by a remorse so violent for the weakness of his soul that his secret rises to his lips, is about to escape him in a burst of sobs, when the ring of a bell—no chimera, that—gives them all a start and arrests him at the very moment when he was about to speak.

Whoever could it be, coming at this hour? They had lived in retirement since the mother's death and saw almost nobody. André Maranne, when he came down to spend a few minutes with them, tapped like a familiar friend. Profound silence in the drawing-room, long colloquy on the landing. Finally, the old servant—she had been in the family as long as the lamp—showed in a young man, a complete stranger, who stopped, struck with admiration at the charming picture of the four darlings gathered round the table. This made his entrance timid, rather awkward. However, he explained clearly the object of his visit. He had been referred to M. Joyeuse by an honest fellow of his acquaintance, old Passajon, to take lessons in bookkeeping. One of his friends happened to be engaged in large financial transactions in connection with an important joint-stock company. He wished to be of service to him in keeping an eye on the employment of the capital, the straightforwardness of the operations; but he was a lawyer, little familiar with financial methods, with the terms employed in banking. Could not M. Joyeuse in the course of a few months, with three or four lessons a week——

"Yes, indeed, sir, yes, indeed," stammered the father, quite overcome by this unlooked-for piece of good luck. "Assuredly I can undertake, in a few months, to qualify you for such auditing work. Where shall we have our lessons?"

"Here, at your own house, if you are agreeable," said the young man, "for I am anxious that no one should know that I am working at the subject. But I shall be grieved if I always frighten everybody away as I have this evening."

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For, at the first words of the visitor, the four curly heads had disappeared, with little whisperings, and with rustlings of skirts, and the drawing-room looked very bare now that the big circle of white light was empty.

Always quick to take offence, where his daughters were concerned, M. Joyeuse replied that "the young girls were accustomed to retire early every evening," and the words were spoken in a brief, dry tone which very clearly signified: "Let us talk of our lessons, young man, if you please." Days were then fixed, free hours in the evening.

As for the terms, they would be whatever monsieur desired.

Monsieur mentioned a sum.

The accountant became quite red. It was the amount he used to earn at Hemerlingue's.

"Oh, no, that is too much."

But the other was no longer listening. He was seeking for words, as though he had something very difficult to say, and suddenly, making up his mind to it:

"Here is your first month's salary."

"But, monsieur——"

The young man insisted. He was a stranger. It was only fair that he should pay in advance. Evidently, Passajon has told his secret.

M. Joyeuse understood, and in a low voice said, "Thank you, oh, thank you," so deeply moved that words failed him. Life! it meant life, several months of life, the time to turn round, to find another place. His darlings would want for nothing. They would have their New Year's presents. Oh, the mercy of Providence!

"Till Wednesday, then, M. Joyeuse."

"Till Wednesday, monsieur——"

"De Géry—Paul de Géry."

And they separated, both delighted, fascinated, the one by the apparition of this unexpected saviour, the other by the adorable picture of which he had only a glimpse, all those young girls grouped round the table covered with books, exercise-books, and skeins of wool, with an air of purity, of industrious honesty. This was a new Paris for

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Paul de Géry, a courageous, home-like Paris, very different from that which he already knew, a Paris of which the writers of stories in the newspapers and the reporters never speak, and which recalled to him his own country home, with an additional charm, that charm which the struggle and tumult around lend to the tranquil, secured refuge.

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VI

FÉLICIA RUYS

"And your son, Jenkins. What are you doing with him? Why does one never see him now at your house? He seemed a nice fellow."

As she spoke in that tone of disdainful bluntness which she almost always used when speaking to the Irishman, Félicia was at work on the bust of the Nabob which she had just commenced, posing her model, laying down and taking up the boasting-tool, quickly wiping her fingers with the little sponge, while the light and peace of a fine Sunday afternoon fell on the top-light of the studio. Félicia "received" every Sunday, if to receive were to leave her door open to allow people to come in, go out, sit down for a moment, without stirring from her work or even interrupting the course of a discussion to welcome the new arrivals. They were artists, with refined heads and luxuriant beards; here and there you might see among them white-haired friends of Ruys, her father; then there were society men, bankers, stock-brokers, and a few young men about town, come to see the handsome girl rather than her sculpture, in order to be able to say at the club in the evening, "I was at Félicia's to-day." Among them was Paul de Géry, silent, absorbed in an admiration which each day sunk into his heart a little more deeply, trying to understand the beautiful sphinx draped in purple cashmere and ecru lace, who worked away bravely amid her clay, a burnisher's apron reaching nearly to her neck, allowing her small, proud head to emerge with those transparent tones, those gleams of veiled radiance of which the sense, the inspiration bring the blood to the cheek as they pass. Paul always remembered what had been said of her in his presence, endeavoured

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to form an opinion for himself, doubted, worried himself, and was charmed, vowing to himself each time that he would come no more and never missing a Sunday. A little woman with gray, powdered hair was always there in the same place, her pink face like a pastel somewhat worn by years, who, in the discrete light of a recess, smiled sweetly, with her hands lying idly on her knees, motionless as a fakir. Jenkins, amiable, with his open face, his black eyes, and his apostolical manner, moved on from one group to another, liked and known by all. He did not miss, either, one of Félicia's days; and, indeed, he showed his patience in this, all the snubs of his hostess both as artist and pretty woman being reserved for him alone. Without appearing to notice them, with ever the same smiling, indulgent serenity, he continued to pay his visits to the daughter of his old Ruys, of the man whom he had so loved and tended to his last moments.

This time, however, the question which Félicia had just addressed to him respecting his son appeared extremely disagreeable to him, and it was with a frown and a real expression of annoyance that he replied: "Ma foi! I know no more than yourself what he is doing. He has quite deserted us. He was bored at home. He cares only for his Bohemia."

Félicia gave a jump that made them all start, and with flashing eyes and nostrils that quivered, said:

"That is too absurd. Ah, now, come, Jenkins. What do you mean by Bohemia? A charming word, by-the-bye, and one that ought to recall long days of wandering in the sun, halts in woody nooks, all the freshness of fruits gathered by the open road. But since you have made a reproach of the name, to whom do you apply it? To a few poor devils with long hair, in love with liberty in rags, who starve to death in a fifth-floor garret, or seek rhymes under tiles through which the rain filters; to those madmen, growing more and more rare, who, from horror of the customary, the traditional, the stupidity of life, have put their feet together and made a jump into freedom? Come, that is too old a story. It is the Bohemia of Murger, with the work-

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house at the end, terror of children, boon of parents, Red Riding-Hood eaten by the wolf. It was worn out a long time ago, that story. Nowadays, you know well that artists are the most regular people in their habits on earth, that they earn money, pay their debts, and contrive to look like the first man you may meet on the street. The true Bohemians exist, however; they are the backbone of our society; but it is in your own world especially that they are to be found. *Parbleu!* They bear no external stamp and nobody distrusts them; but, so far as uncertainty, want of substantial foundation in their lives is concerned, they have nothing to wish for from those whom they call so disdainfully 'irregulars.' Ah! if we knew how much turpitude, what fantastic or abominable stories, a black evening-coat, the most correct of your hideous modern garments, can mask. Why, see, Jenkins, the other evening at your house I was amusing myself by counting them—all these society adventurers——"

The little old lady, pink and powdered, put in gently from her place:

"Félicia, take care!"

But she continued, without listening:

"What do you call Monpavon, doctor? And Bois l'Héry? And de Mora himself? And—" She was going to say "and the Nabob?" but stopped herself.

"And how many others! Oh, truly, you may well speak of Bohemia with contempt. But your fashionable doctor's clientèle, oh, sublime Jenkins, consists of that very thing alone. The Bohemia of commerce, of finance, of politics; unclassed people, shady people of all castes, and the higher one ascends the more you find of them, because rank gives impunity and wealth can pay for rude silence."

She spoke with a hard tone, greatly excited, with lip curled by a savage disdain. The doctor forced a laugh and assumed a light, condescending tone, repeating: "Ah, feather-brain, feather-brain!" And his glance, anxious and beseeching, sought the Nabob, as though to demand his pardon for all these paradoxical impertinences.

But Jansoulet, far from appearing vexed, was so proud

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of posing to this handsome artist, so appreciative of the honour that was being done him, that he nodded his head approvingly.

"She is right, Jenkins," said he at last, "she is right. It is we who are the true Bohemia. Take me, for example; take Hemerlingue, two of the men who handle the most money in Paris. When I think of the point from which we started, of all the trades through which we have made our way. Hemerlingue, once keeper of a regimental canteen. I, who have carried sacks of wheat in the docks of Marseilles for my living. And the strokes of luck by which our fortunes have been built up—as all fortunes, moreover, in these times are built up. Go to the Bourse between three and five. But, pardon, mademoiselle, see, through my absurd habit of gesticulating when I speak, I have lost the pose. Come, is this right?"

"It is useless," said Félicia, throwing down her boasting-tool with the gesture of a spoilt child. "I shall not be able to do any more to-day."

She was a strange girl, this Félicia. A true daughter of an artist, of a genial and dissolute artist, thoroughly in the romantic tradition, as was Sébastien Ruys. She had never known her mother. She was the fruit of one of those transient loves which used to enter suddenly into the bachelor life of the sculptor like swallows into a dovecote of which the door is always open, and who leave it again because no nest can be built there.

This time, the lady, ere she flew away, had left to the great artist, then about forty years of age, a beautiful child whom he had brought up, and who became the joy and the passion of his life. Until she was thirteen, Félicia had lived in her father's house, introducing a childish and tender note into that studio full of idlers, models, and huge greyhounds lying at full length on the couches. There was a corner reserved for her, for her attempts at sculpture, a whole miniature equipment, a tripod, wax, etc., and old Ruys would cry to those who entered:

"Don't go there. Don't move anything. That is the little one's corner."

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So it came about that at ten years old she scarcely knew how to read and could handle the boasting-tool with marvellous skill. Ruys would have liked to keep always with him this child whom he never felt to be in the way, a member of the great brotherhood from her earliest years. But it was pitiful to see the little girl amid the free behaviour of the frequenters of the house, the constant going and coming of the models, the discussions of an art, so to speak, entirely physical, and even at the noisy Sunday dinner-parties, sitting among five or six women, to all of whom her father spoke familiarly. There were actresses, dancers or singers, who, after dinner, would settle themselves down to smoke with their elbows on the table absorbed in the indecent stories so keenly relished by their host. Fortunately, childhood is protected by a resisting candour, by an enamel over which all impurities glide. Félicia became noisy, turbulent, ill-behaved, but without being touched by all that passed over her little soul so near to earth.

Every year, in the summer, she used to go to stay for a few days with her godmother, Constance Crenmitz, the elder Crenmitz, whom all Europe had called for so long "the famous dancer," and who lived in peaceful retirement at Fontainebleau.

The arrival of the "little demon" used to bring into the life of the old dancer an element of disturbance from which she had afterward all the year to recover. The frights which the child caused her by her daring in climbing, in jumping, in riding, all the passionate transports of her wild nature made this visit for her at once delicious and terrible; delicious, for she adored Félicia, the one family tie that remained to this poor old salamander in retirement after thirty years of fluttering in the glare of the footlights; terrible, for the demon used to upset without pity the dancer's house, decorated, carefully ordered, perfumed, like her dressing-room at the opera, and adorned with a museum of souvenirs dated from every stage in the world.

Constance Crenmitz was the one feminine element in Félicia's childhood. Futile, limited in mind, she had at least a coquettish taste, agile fingers that knew how to sew, to

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embroider, to arrange things, to leave in every corner of the room their dainty and individual trace. She alone undertook to train up the wild young plant, and to awaken with discretion the woman in this strange being on whom cloaks, furs, everything elegant devised by fashion, seemed to take odd folds or look curiously awkward.

It was the dancer again—in what neglect must she not have lived, this little Ruys—who, triumphing over the paternal selfishness, insisted upon a necessary separation, when Félicia was twelve or thirteen years old; and she took also the responsibility of finding a suitable school, a school which she selected of deliberate purpose, very comfortable and very respectable, right at the upper end of an airy road, occupying a roomy, old-world building surrounded by high walls, big trees, a sort of convent without its constraint and contempt of serious studies.

Much work, on the contrary, was done in Mme. Belin's institution, where the pupils went out only on the principal holidays and had no communication with outside except the visits of relatives on Thursdays, in a little garden planted with flowering shrubs or in the immense parlour with carved and gilded work over its doors. The first entry of Félicia into this almost monastic house caused indeed a certain sensation; her dresses chosen by the Austrian dancer, her hair curling to her waist, her gait free and easy like a boy's, aroused some hostility, but she was a Parisian and could adapt herself quickly to every situation and to all surroundings. A few days later, she looked better than any one in the little black apron, to which the more coquettish were wont to hang their watches, the straight skirt —a severe and hard prescription at that period when fashion expanded women's figures with an infinity of flounces —the regulation coiffure, two plaits tied rather low, at the neck, after the manner of the Roman peasants.

Strange to say, the regularity of the classes, their calm exactitude, suited Félicia's nature, intelligent and quick, in which the taste for study was relieved by a juvenile expansion at ease in the noisy good-humour of playtime. She was popular. Among those daughters of wealthy business-

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men, of Parisian lawyers or of gentlemen-farmers, a respectable and rather affectedly serious world, the well-known name of old Ruys, the respect with which at Paris an artist's reputation is surrounded, created for Félicia a greatly envied position, rendered more brilliant still by her successes in the school-work, a genuine talent for drawing, and her beauty, that superiority which asserts its power even among young girls. In the wholesome atmosphere of the boarding-school, she was conscious of an extreme pleasure as she grew feminized, in resuming her sex, in learning to know order, regularity, otherwise than these were taught by that amiable dancer whose kisses seemed always to keep the taste of paint and her embraces somewhat artificial in the curving of her arms. Ruys, her father, was enraptured each time that he came to see his daughter, to find her more grown, womanly, knowing how to enter, to walk, and to leave a room with that pretty courtesy which caused all Mme. Belin's pupils to long for the trailing rustle of a long skirt.

At first he came often, then, as he had not time enough for all his commissions, accepted and undertaken, the advances on which went to pay for the scrapes, the pleasures of his existence, he was seen more seldom in the parlour. Finally, sickness intervened. Stricken by an incurable anæmia, he would remain for weeks without leaving his house, without doing any work. Thereupon he wished to have his daughter with him again; and from the boarding-school, sheltered by so healthy a tranquility, Félicia returned once more to her father's studio, haunted still by the same boon companions, the parasites which swarm around every celebrity, into the midst of which sickness had introduced a new personage, Dr. Jenkins.

His fine open countenance, the air of candour, of serenity that seemed to dwell about the person of this physician, already famous, who was wont to speak of his art so carelessly and yet seemed to work miraculous cures, the care with which he surrounded her father, these things made a great impression on the young girl. Jenkins became immediately her friend, confidant, a vigilant and kind guardian.

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Occasionally, when, in the studio, somebody—her father most likely of all—uttered a risky jest, the Irishman would contract his eyebrows, give a little click of the tongue, or perhaps distract Félicia's attention.

He often used to take her to pass the day with Mme. Jenkins, endeavouring to prevent her from becoming again the wild young thing she was before going to school, or even something worse, as she threatened to do in the moral neglect, sadder than all other, in which she was left.

But the young girl had as a protection something even better than the irreproachable and worldly example of the handsome Mme. Jenkins: the art that she adored, the enthusiasm which it implanted in her nature wholly occupied with outside things, the sentiment of beauty, of truth, which, from her thoughtful brain, full of ideas, passed into her fingers with a little quivering of the nerves, a desire of the idea accomplished, of the realized image. All day long she would work at her sculpture, giving shape to her dreams with that happiness of instinctive youth which lends so much charm to early work; this prevented her from any excessive regret for the austerity of the Belin institution, sheltering and light as the veil of a novice before her vows, and preserved her also from dangerous conversations, unheard amid her unique preoccupation.

Ruys was proud of this talent growing up at his side. Growing every day feebler, already at that stage in which the artist regrets himself, he found in following Félicia's progress a certain consolation for his own ended career. He saw the boasting-tool, which trembled in his hand, taken up again under his eye with a virile firmness and assurance, tempered by all those delicacies of her being which a woman can apply to the realization of an art. A strange sensation, this double paternity, this survival of genius as it abandons the man whose day is over to pass into him who is at his dawn, like those beautiful, familiar birds which, on the eve of a death, will desert the menaced roof to fly away to a less mournful lodging.

During the last period of her father's life, Félicia—a great artist and still a mere child—used to execute half of

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his works; and nothing was more touching than this collaboration of father and daughter, in the same studio, around the same group. The operation did not always proceed peaceably; although her father's pupil, Félicia already felt her own personality rebel against any despotic direction. She had those audacities of the beginner, those intuitions of the future which are the heritage of young talents, and, in opposition to the romantic traditions of Sébastien Ruys, a tendency to modern realism, a need to plant that glorious old flag upon some new monument.

These things were the occasion of terrible arguments, of discussions from which the father came out beaten, conquered by his daughter's logic, astonished at the progress made by the young, while the old, who have opened the way for them, remain motionless at the point from which they started. When she was working for him, Félicia would yield more easily; but, where her own sculpture was concerned she was found to be intractable. Thus the *Joueur de Boules*, her first exhibited work, which obtained so great a success at the Salon of 1862, was the subject of violent scenes between the two artists, of contradictions so strong, that Jenkins had to intervene and help to secure the safety of the plaster-cast which Ruys had threatened to destroy.

Apart from such little dramas, which in no way affected the tenderness of their hearts, these two beings adored each other with the presentiment and, gradually, the cruel certitude of an approaching separation, when suddenly there occurred in Félicia's life a horrible event. One day, Jenkins had taken her to dine at his house, as often happened. Mme. Jenkins was away on a couple of days' visit, as also her son; but the doctor's age, his semi-paternal intimacy, allowed him to have with him, even in his wife's absence, this young girl whose fifteen years, the fifteen years of an Eastern Jewess glorious in her precocious beauty, left her still near childhood.

The dinner was very gay, and Jenkins pleasant and cordial as usual. Afterwards they went into the doctor's study, and suddenly, on the couch, in the middle of an

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intimate and quite friendly conversation about her father, his health, their work together, Félicia felt as it were the chill of a gulf between herself and this man, then the brutal grasp of a faun. She beheld an unknown Jenkins, wild-looking, stammering with a besotted laugh and outraging hands. In the surprise, the unexpectedness of this bestial attack, any other than Félicia—a child of her own age, really innocent, would have been lost. As for her, poor little thing! what saved her was her knowledge. She had heard so many stories of this kind of thing at her father's table! and then art, and the life of the studio— She was not an *ingénue*. In a moment she understood the object of this grasp, struggled, sprang up, then, not being strong enough, cried out. He was afraid, released his hold, and suddenly she found herself standing up, free, with the man on his knees weeping and begging forgiveness. He had yielded to a fit of madness. She was so beautiful; he loved her so much. For months he had been struggling. But now it was over, never again, oh, never again! Not even would he so much as touch the hem of her dress. She made no reply, trembled, put her hair and her clothes straight again with the fingers of a woman demented. To go home—she wished to go home instantly, quite alone. He sent a servant with her; and, quite low, as she was getting into the carriage, whispered:

"Above all, not a word. It would kill your father."

He knew her so well, he was so sure of his power over her through that suggestion, the blackguard! that he returned on the morrow looking bright as ever and with loyal face as though nothing had happened. In fact, she never spoke of the matter to her father, nor to any one. But, dating from that day, a change came over her, a sudden development, as it were, of her haughty ways. She was subject to caprices, wearinesses, a curl of disgust in her smile, and sometimes quick fits of anger against her father, a glance of contempt which reproached him for not having known how to watch over her.

"What is the matter with her?" Ruys, her father, used to say; and Jenkins, with the authority of a doctor, would put it down to her age and some physical disturbance.

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He avoided speaking to the girl himself, counting on time to efface the sinister impression, and not despairing of attaining his end, for he desired it still, more than ever, prey to the exasperated love of a man of forty-seven to one of those incurable passions of maturity; and that was this hypocrite's punishment. This unusual condition of his daughter was a real grief to the sculptor; but this grief was of short duration. Without warning, Ruys flickered out of life, fell to pieces in a moment, as was the way with all the Irishman's patients. His last words were:

"Jenkins, I beg you to look after my daughter."

They were so ironically mournful that Jenkins could not prevent himself from turning pale.

Félicia was even more stupefied than grief-stricken. To the amazement caused by death, which she had never seen and which now came before her wearing features so dear, there was joined the sense of a vast solitude surrounded by darkness and perils.

A few of the sculptor's friends gathered together as a family council to consider the future of this unfortunate child without relatives or fortune. Fifty francs had been discovered in the box where Sébastien used to put his money, on a piece of the studio furniture well known to its needy frequenters and visited by them without scruple. There was no other inheritance, at least in cash; only a quantity of artistic and curious furniture of the most sumptuous description, a few valuable pictures, and a certain amount of money owing but scarcely sufficing to cover numberless debts. It was proposed to organize a sale. Félicia, when she was consulted, replied that she would not care if everything were sold, but, for God's sake, let them leave her in peace.

The sale did not take place, however, thanks to the godmother, the excellent Crenmitz, who suddenly made her appearance, calm and gentle as usual.

"Don't listen to them, my child. Sell nothing. Your old Constance has an income of fifteen thousand francs, which was destined to come to you later on. You will take advantage of it at once, that is all. We will live here to-

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gether. You will see, I shall not be in the way. You will work at your sculpture, I shall manage the house. Does that suit you?"

It was said so tenderly, with that childishness of accent which foreigners have when expressing themselves in French, that the girl was deeply moved. Her heart that had seemed turned to stone opened, a burning flood came pouring from her eyes, and she rushed, flung herself into the arms of the dancer. "Ah, godmother, how good you are to me! Yes, yes, don't leave me any more. Stay with me always. Life frightens and disgusts me. I see so much hypocrisy in it, so much falsehood." And the old woman arranged for herself a silken and embroidered nest in this house so like a traveller's camp laden with treasures from every land, and the suggested dual life began for these two different natures.

It was no small sacrifice that Constance had made for the dear demon in quitting her Fontainebleau retreat for Paris, which inspired her with terror. Ever since the day when this dancer, with her extravagant caprices, who made princely fortunes flow and disappear through her five open fingers, had descended from her triumphant position, a little of its dazzling glitter still in her eyes, and had attempted to resume an ordinary existence, to manage her little income and her modest household, she had been the object of a thousand impudent exploitations, of frauds that were easy in view of the ignorance of this poor butterfly that was frightened by reality and came into collision with all its unknown difficulties. Living in Félicia's house, the responsibility became still more serious by reason of the wastefulness introduced long ago by the father and continued by the daughter, two artists knowing nothing of economy. She had, moreover, other difficulties to conquer. She found the studio insupportable with its permanent atmosphere of tobacco smoke, an impenetrable cloud for her, in which the discussions on art, the analysis of ideas, were lost and which infallibly gave her a headache. "Chaff," above all, frightened her. As a foreigner, as at one time a divinity of the green-room, brought up on out-of-date compliments,

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on gallantries *à la Dorat*, she did not understand it, and would feel terrified in the presence of the wild exaggerations, the paradoxes of these Parisians refined by the liberty of the studio.

That kind of thing was intimidating to her who had never possessed wit save in the vivacity of her feet, and reduced her simply to the rank of a lady-companion; and, seeing this amiable old dame sitting, silent and smiling, her knitting in her lap, like one of Chardin's *bourgeoises*, or hastening by the side of her cook up the long Rue de Chaillot, where the nearest market happened to be, one would never have guessed that that simple old body had ruled kings, princes, the whole class of amorous nobles and financiers, at the caprice of her step and pirouettings.

Paris is full of such fallen stars, extinguished by the crowd.

Some of these famous ones, these conquerors of a former day, cherish a rage in their heart; others, on the contrary, enjoy the past blissfully, digest in an ineffable content all their glorious and ended joys, asking only repose, silence, shadow, good enough for memory and contemplation, so that when they die people are quite astonished to learn that they had been still living.

Constance Crenmitz was among these fortunate ones. The household of these two women was a curious one. Both were childlike, placing side by side in a common domain, inexperience and ambition, the tranquility of an accomplished destiny and the fever of a life plunged in struggle, all the different qualities manifest even in the serene style of dress affected by this blonde who seemed all white like a faded rose, with something beneath her bright colours that vaguely suggested the footlights, and that brunette with the regular features, who almost always clothed her beauty in dark materials, simple in fold, a semblance, as it were, of virility.

Things unforeseen, caprices, ignorance of even the least important details, led to an extreme disorder in the finances of the household, disorder which was only rectified by dint of privations, by the dismissal of servants, by reforms

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that were laughable in their exaggeration. During one of these crises, Jenkins had made veiled delicate offers, which, however, were repulsed with contempt by Félicia.

"It is not nice of you," Constance would remark to her, "to be so hard on the poor doctor. After all, there was nothing offensive in his suggestion. An old friend of your father."

"He, any one's friend! Ah, the hypocrite!"

And Félicia, hardly able to contain herself, would give an ironical turn to her wrath, imitating Jenkins with his oily manner and his hand on his heart; then, puffing out her cheeks, she would say in a loud, deep voice full of lying unction:

"Let us be humane, let us be kind. To do good without hope of reward! That is the whole point."

Constance used to laugh till the tears came, in spite of herself. The resemblance was so perfect.

"All the same, you are too hard. You will end by driving him away altogether."

"Little fear of that," a shake of the girl's head would reply.

In effect he always came back, pleasant, amiable, dissimulating his passion, which was visible only when it grew jealous of newcomers, paying assiduous attention to the old dancer, who, in spite of everything, found his good-nature pleasing and recognised in him a man of her own time, of the time when one accosted a woman with a kiss on her hand, with a compliment on her appearance.

One morning, Jenkins having called in the course of his round, found Constance alone and doing nothing in the antechamber.

"You see, doctor, I am on guard," she remarked tranquilly.

"How is that?"

"Félicia is at work. She wishes not to be disturbed; and the servants are so stupid, I am myself seeing that her orders are obeyed."

Then, seeing that the Irishman made a step towards the studio:

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"No, no, don't go in. She told me very particularly not to let any one go in."

"But I?"

"I beg you not. You would get me a scolding."

Jenkins was about to take his leave when a burst of laughter from Félicia, coming through the curtains, made him prick up his ears.

"She is not alone, then?"

"No, the Nabob is with her. They are having a sitting for the portrait."

"And why this mystery? It is a very singular thing." He commenced to walk backward and forward, evidently very angry, but containing his wrath.

At last he burst forth.

It was an unheard-of impropriety to let a girl thus shut herself in with a man.

He was surprised that one so serious, so devoted as Constance— What did it look like?

The old lady looked at him with stupefaction. As though Félicia were like other girls! And then what danger was there with the Nabob, so staid a man and so ugly? Besides, Jenkins ought to know quite well that Félicia never consulted anybody, that she always had her own way.

"No, no, it is impossible! I cannot tolerate this," exclaimed the Irishman.

And, without paying any further heed to the dancer, who raised her arms to heaven as a call upon it to witness what was about to happen, he moved towards the studio; but, instead of entering immediately, he softly half-opened the door and raised a corner of the hangings, whereby the portion of the room in which the Nabob was posing became visible to him, although at a considerable distance.

Jansoulet, seated without cravat and with his waistcoat open, was talking apparently in some agitation and in a low voice. Félicia was replying in a similar tone, in laughing whispers. The sitting was very animated. Then a silence, a silken rustle of skirts, and the artist, going up to her model, turned down his linen collar all round with

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familiar gesture, allowing her light hand to run over the sun-tanned skin.

That Ethiopian face on which the muscles stood out in the very intoxication of health, with its long drooping eyelashes as of some deer being gently stroked in its sleep; the bold profile of the girl as she leaned over those strange features in order to verify their proportions; then a violent, irresistible gesture, clutching the delicate hand as it passed and pressing it to two thick, passionate lips. Jenkins saw all that in one red flash.

The noise that he made in entering caused the two personages instantly to resume their respective positions, and, in the strong light which dazzled his prying eyes, he saw the young girl standing before him, indignant, stupefied.

"Who is that? Who has taken the liberty?" and the Nabob, on his platform, with his collar turned down, petrified, monumental.

Jenkins, a little abashed, frightened by his own audacity, murmured some excuses. He had something very urgent to say to M. Jansoulet, a piece of news which was most important and would suffer no delay. "He knew upon the best authority that certain decorations were to be bestowed on the 16th of March."

Immediately the face of the Nabob, that for a moment had been frowning, relaxed.

"Ah! can it be true?"

He abandoned his pose. The thing was worth the trouble, *que diable!* M. de la Perrière, a secretary of the department involved, had been commissioned by the Empress to visit the Bethlehem Refuge. Jenkins had come in search of the Nabob to take him to see the secretary at the Tuileries and to appoint a day. This visit to Bethlehem, it meant the cross for him.

"Quick, let us start, my dear doctor. I follow you."

He was no longer angry with Jenkins for having disturbed him, and he knotted his cravat feverishly, forgetting in his new emotion how he had been upset a moment earlier, for ambition with him came before all else.

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While the two men were talking in a half-whisper, Félicia, standing motionless before them, with quivering nostrils and her lip curled in contempt, watched them with an air of saying, "Well, I am waiting."

Jansoulet apologized for being obliged to interrupt the sitting; but a visit of the most extreme importance— She smiled in pity.

"Don't mention it, don't mention it. At the point which we have reached I can work without you."

"Oh, yes," said the doctor, "the work is almost completed."

He added with the air of a connoisseur:

"It is a fine piece of work."

And, counting upon covering his retreat with this compliment, he made for the door with shoulders drooped; but Félicia detained him abruptly.

"Stay, you. I have something to say to you."

He saw clearly from her look that he would have to yield, on pain of an explosion.

"You will excuse me, *cher ami?* Mademoiselle has a word for me. My brougham is at the door. Get in. I will be with you immediately."

As soon as the door of the studio had closed on that heavy, retreating foot, each of them looked at the other full in the face.

"You must be either drunk or mad to have allowed yourself to behave in this way. What! you dare to enter my house when I am not at home? What does this violence mean? By what right——"

"By the right of a despairing and incurable passion."

"Be silent, Jenkins, you are saying words that I will not hear. I allow you to come here out of pity, from habit, because my father was fond of you. But never speak to me again of your—love"—she uttered the word in a very low voice, as though it were shameful—"or you shall never see me again, even though I should have to kill myself in order to escape you once and for all."

A child caught in mischief could not bend its head more humbly than did Jenkins, as he replied:

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"It is true. I was in the wrong. A moment of madness, of blindness— But why do you amuse yourself by torturing my heart as you do?"

"I think of you often, however."

"Whether you think of me or not, I am there, I see what goes on, and your coquetry hurts me terribly."

A touch of red mounted to her cheeks at this reproach.

"A coquette, I? And with whom?"

"With that," said the Irishman, indicating the ape-like and powerful bust.

She tried to laugh.

"The Nabob? What folly!"

"Don't tell an untruth about it now. Do you think I am blind, that I do not notice all your little manœuvres? You remain alone with him for very long at a time. Just now, I was there. I saw you." He dropped his voice as though breath had failed him. "What do you want, strange and cruel child? I have seen you repulse the most handsome, the most noble, the greatest. That little de Géry devours you with his eyes; you take no notice. The Duc de Mora himself has not been able to reach your heart. And it is that man there who is ugly, vulgar, who has no thought of you, whose head is full of quite other matters than love. You saw how he went off just now. What can you mean? What do you expect from him?"

"I want—I want him to marry me. There!"

Coldly, in a softened tone, as though this avowal had brought her nearer the level of the man whom she so much despised, she explained her motives. The life which she led was pushing her into a situation from which there was no way out. She had luxurious and expensive tastes, habits of disorder which nothing could conquer and which would bring her inevitably to poverty, both her and that good Crenmitz, who was allowing herself to be ruined without saying a word. In three years, four years at the outside, all would be over with them. And then the wretched expedients, the debts, the tatters and old shoes of poor artists' households. Or, indeed, the lover, the man who keeps a mistress—that is to say, slavery and infamy.

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"Come, come," said Jenkins. "And what of me, am I not here?"

"Anything rather than you," she exclaimed, stiffening. "No, what I require, what I want, is a husband who will protect me from others and from myself, who will save me from many terrible things of which I am afraid in my moments of ennui, from gulfs in which I feel that I may perish, some one who will love me while I am at work and relieve my poor old wearied fairy of her sentry duty. This man here suits my purpose, and I thought of him from the first time I met him. He is ugly, but he has a kind manner; then, too, he is ridiculously rich, and wealth, upon that scale, must be amusing. Oh, I know well enough. No doubt there is in his life some blemish that has brought him luck. All that money cannot be made honestly. But come, truly now, Jenkins, with your hand on that heart you so often invoke, do you think me a wife who should be very attractive to an honest man? See: among all these young men who ask permission as a favour to be allowed to come here, which one has dreamed of offering me marriage? Never a single one. De Géry no more than the rest. I am attractive, but I make men afraid. It is intelligible enough. What can one imagine of a girl brought up as I have been, without a mother, among my father's models and mistresses? What mistresses, *mon Dieu!* And Jenkins for sole guardian. Oh, when I think, when I think!"

And from that far-off memory things surged up that stirred her to a deeper wrath.

"Ah, yes, *parbleu!* I am a daughter of adventure, and this adventurer is, of a truth, the fit husband for me."

"You must wait at least till he is a widower," replied Jenkins calmly. "And, in that case, you run the risk of having a long time yet to wait, for his Levantine seems to enjoy excellent health."

Félicia Ruys turned pale.

"He is married?"

"Married? certainly, and father of a bevy of children. The whole camp of them landed a couple of days ago."

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For a minute she remained overwhelmed, looking into space, her cheeks quivering. Opposite her, the Nabob's large face, with its flattened nose, its sensual and weak mouth, spoke insistently of life and reality in the gloss of its clay. She looked at it for an instant, then made a step forward and, with a gesture of disgust, overturned, with the high wooden stool on which it stood, the glistening and greasy block, which fell on the floor shattered to a heap of mud.

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VII

JANSOULET AT HOME

MARRIED he was and had been so for twelve years, but he had mentioned the fact to no one among his Parisian acquaintances, through Eastern habit, that silence which the people of those countries preserve upon affairs of the harem. Suddenly it was reported that madame was coming, that apartments were to be prepared for herself, her children, and her female attendants. The Nabob took the whole second floor of the house on the Place Vendôme, the tenant of which was turned out at an expense worthy of a Nabob. The stables also were extended, the staff doubled; then, one day, coachmen and carriages went to the Gare de Lyon to meet madame, who arrived by a train heated expressly for her during the journey from Marseilles and filled by a suite of negresses, serving-maids, and little negro boys.

She arrived in a condition of frightful exhaustion, utterly worn out and bewildered by her long railway journey, the first of her life, for, after being taken to Tunis while still quite a child, she had never left it. From her carriage, two negroes carried her into her apartments on an easy chair which, subsequently, always remained downstairs beneath the entrance porch, in readiness for these difficult removals. Mme. Jansoulet could not mount the staircase, which made her dizzy; she would not have lifts, which creaked under her weight; besides, she never walked. Of enormous size, bloated to such a degree that it was impossible to assign to her any particular age between twenty-five and forty, with a rather pretty face but grown shapeless in its features, dull eyes beneath lids that drooped, vulgarly dressed in foreign clothes, laden with diamonds and jewels

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after the fashion of a Hindu idol, she was as fine a sample as could be found of those transplanted European women called Levantines—a curious race of obese creoles whom speech and costume alone attach to our world, but whom the East wraps round with its stupefying atmosphere, with the subtle poisons of its drugged air in which everything, from the tissues of the skin to the waists of garments, even to the soul, is enervated and relaxed.

This particular specimen of it was the daughter of an immensely rich Belgian who was engaged in the coral trade at Tunis, and in whose business Jansoulet, after his arrival in the country, had been employed for some months. Mlle. Afchin, in those days a delicious little doll of twelve years old, with radiant complexion, hair, and health, used often to come to fetch her father from the counting-house in the great chariot with its yoke of mules which carried them to their fine villa at La Marsu, in the vicinity of Tunis. This mischievous child with splendid bare shoulders, had dazzled the adventurer as he caught glimpses of her amid her luxurious surroundings, and, years afterward, when, having become rich and the favourite of the Bey, he began to think of settling down, it was to her that his thoughts went. The child had grown into a fat young woman, heavy and white. Her intelligence, dull in the first instance, had become still more obscured through the inertia of a dormouse's existence, the carelessness of a father given over to business, the use of opium-saturated tobacco and of preserves made from rose-leaves, the torpor of her Flemish blood, re-enforced by Oriental indolence. Furthermore, she was ill-bred, gluttonous, sensual, arrogant, a Levantine jewel in perfection.

But Jansoulet saw nothing of all this.

For him she was, and remained, up to the time of her arrival in Paris, a superior creature, a lady of the most exalted rank, a Demoiselle Afchin. He addressed her with respect, in her presence maintained an attitude which was a little constrained and timid, gave her money without counting, satisfied her most costly fantasies, her wildest caprices, all the strange desires of a Levantine's brain dis-

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ordered through boredom and idleness. One word alone excused everything. She was a Demoiselle Afchin. Beyond this, no intercourse between them; he always at the Kasbah or the Bardo, courting the favour of the Bey, or else in his counting-houses; she passing her days in bed, wearing in her hair a diadem of pearls worth three hundred thousand francs which she never took off, befuddling her brain with smoking, living as in a harem, admiring herself in the glass, adorning herself, in company with a few other Levantines, whose supreme distraction consisted in measuring with their necklaces arms and legs which rivalled each other in plumpness, and bearing children about whom she never gave herself the least trouble, whom she never used to see, who had not even cost her a pang, for she gave birth to them under chloroform. A lump of white flesh perfumed with musk. And, as Jansoulet used to say with pride: "I married a Demoiselle Afchin!"

Under the sky of Paris and its cold light the disillusion began. Determined to settle down, to receive, to give entertainments, the Nabob had brought his wife over with the idea of setting her at the head of the establishment; but when he saw the arrival of that display of gaudy draperies of Palais-Royal jewelry, and all the strange paraphernalia in her suite, he had a vague impression of a Queen Pomaré in exile. The fact was that now he had seen real women of the world, and he made comparisons. After having planned a great ball to celebrate her arrival, he prudently changed his mind. Besides, Mme. Jansoulet desired to see nobody. Here her natural indolence was increased by the home-sickness which she suffered, from the first hour of her coming, by the chilliness of a yellow fog and the dripping rain. She passed several days without getting up, weeping aloud like a child, saying that it was in order to cause her death that she had been brought to Paris, and not permitting her women to do even the least thing for her. She lay there bellowing among the laces of her pillow, with her hair bristling in disorder about her diadem, the windows of the room closed, the curtains drawn close, the lamps lighted night and day, crying out that she wanted

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to go away–y, to go away–y; and it was pitiful to see, in that funereal gloom, the half-unpacked trunks scattered over the carpets, the frightened maids, the negresses crouched around their mistress in her nervous attack, they also groaning, with haggard eyes like those dogs of arctic travellers that go mad without the sun.

The Irish doctor, called in to deal with all this trouble, had no success with his fatherly manners, the pretty phrases that issued from his compressed lips. The Levantine would have nothing to do at any price with the arsenic pearls as a tonic. The Nabob was in consternation. What was to be done? Send her back to Tunis with the children? It was scarcely possible. He was decidedly in disgrace in that quarter. The Hemerlingues were triumphant. A last affront had filled up the measure. At Jansoulet's departure, the Bey had commissioned him to have gold-pieces struck at the Paris Mint of a new design to the value of several millions; then the order, suddenly withdrawn, had been given to Hemerlingue. Publicly outraged, Jansoulet had replied by a public demonstration, offering for sale all his possessions, his palace at the Bardo given to him by the former Bey, his villas of La Marsu all of white marble, surrounded by splendid gardens, his counting-houses which were the largest and the most sumptuous in the city, and, charging, finally, the intelligent Bompain to bring over to him his wife and children in order to make a clear affirmation of a definitive departure. After such an uproar, it was no easy thing for him to return there; this was what he endeavoured to make evident to Mlle. Afchin, who only replied to him by deep groans. He tried to console her, to amuse her, but what distraction could be found to appeal to that monstrously apathetic nature? And then, could he change the sky of Paris, restore to the unhappy Levantine her *patio* paved with marble, where she used to pass long hours in a cool, delicious sleepiness, listening to the water as it dripped on the great alabaster fountain with its three basins, one over the other, and her gilded barge, with its awning of crimson, which eight Tripolitan boatmen supple and

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vigorous, rowed after sunset on the beautiful lake of El-Baheira? However luxurious the apartment of the Place Vendôme might be, it could not compensate for the loss of these marvels. And then she would be more miserable than ever. At last, a man who was a frequent visitor to the house succeeded in lifting her out of her despair. This was Cabassu, the man who described himself on his cards as "professor of massage," a big, dark, thick-set man, smelling of garlic and pomade, square-shouldered, hairy to the eyes, and who knew stories of Parisian seraglios, tales within the reach of madame's intelligence. Having once come to massage her, she wished to see him again, retained him. He had to give up all his other clients, and became, at the salary of a senator, the masseur of this stout lady, her page, her reader, her body-guard. Jansoulet, delighted to see his wife contented, was unconscious of the ridicule attached to this intimacy.

Cabassu was now seen in the Bois, seated beside the favourite maid in the huge and sumptuous open carriage, also at the back of the theatre boxes taken by the Levantine, for she began to go out, since she had grown less torpid under the treatment of her masseur and was determined to amuse herself. The theatre pleased her, especially farces or melodramas. The apathy of her large body found a stimulus in the false glare of the footlights. But it was to Cardailhac's theatre that she went for preference. There, the Nabob found himself in his own house. From the chief superintendent to the humblest *ouvreuse*, the whole staff was under his control. He had a key which enabled him to pass from the corridors on to the stage; and the small drawing-room communicating with his box was decorated in Oriental manner, with a concave ceiling like a beehive, its couches covered in camel's hair, the flame of the gas inclosed in a little Moorish lantern. Here one could enjoy a siesta during rather long intervals between the acts; a gallant attention on the part of the manager to the wife of his partner. Nor did that ape of a Cardailhac stop at this. Remarking the taste of the Demoiselle Afchin for the drama, he had ended by persuading her that she also possessed the intuition, the

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knowledge of it, and by begging her when she had nothing better to do to glance over and let him know what she thought of the pieces which were submitted to him. A good way of cementing the partnership more firmly.

Poor manuscripts in your blue or yellow covers, bound by hope with fragile ribbons, that set out full of ambition and dreams, who knows what hands may touch you, turn over your pages, what indiscreet fingers deflower your charm, the charm of the unknown, that glittering dust which lies on new ideas? Who may judge you and who condemn? Sometimes, before dining out, Jansoulet, mounting to his wife's room, would find her on her lounge, smoking, her head thrown back, bundles of manuscripts by her side, and Cabassu, armed with a blue pencil, reading in his thick voice and with the Bourg-Saint-Andéol accent, some dramatic lucubration which he cut and scored without pity at the least criticism from the lady.

"Don't disturb yourselves," the good Nabob would signal with his hand, entering on tiptoe. He would listen, shake his head with an admiring air, as he watched his wife: "She is astonishing!" for he himself understood nothing about literature, and there, at least, he could discover once again the superiority of Mlle. Afchin.

"She had the instinct of the stage," as Cardailhac used to say; but, on the other hand, the maternal instinct was wanting in her. Never did she take any interest in her children, abandoning them to the hands of strangers, and, when they were brought to her once a month, contenting herself with offering to them the flaccid and inanimate flesh of her cheeks between two puffs of cigarette-smoke, without making any inquiries into those details of their bringing up and of their health which perpetuate the physical bond of maternity and make the hearts of true mothers bleed at the least suffering of their children.

They were three big, dull, and apathetic boys of eleven, nine, and seven years, having, with the sallow complexion and the precocious bloatedness of the Levantine, the kind, black, velvety eyes of their father. They were ignorant as young lords of the middle ages. At Tunis, M. Bompain had

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directed their studies; but at Paris, the Nabob, anxious to give them the benefit of a Parisian education, had sent them to that smartest and most expensive of boarding-schools, the College Bourdaloue, managed by good priests who sought less to instruct their pupils than to make of them good-mannered and right-thinking men of the world, and succeeded in turning them out affectedly grave and ridiculous little prigs, disdainful of games, absolutely ignorant, without anything spontaneous or boyish about them, and of a desperate precocity. The little Jansoulets were not very happy in this forcing-house, notwithstanding the immunities which they enjoyed by reason of their immense wealth; they were, indeed, utterly left to themselves. Even the creoles in the charge of the institution had some friend whom they visited and people who came to see them; but the Jansoulets were never summoned to the parlour, no one knew any of their relatives; from time to time they received basketfuls of sweetmeats, piles of confectionery, and that was all. The Nabob, doing some shopping in Paris, would strip for them the whole of a pastry-cook's window and send the spoils to the college, with that generous impulse of the heart mingled with negro ostentation which characterized all his actions. It was the same in the matter of playthings. They were always too pretty, tricked out too finely, useless—those toys that are for show but which the Parisian does not buy. But that which above all attracted to the little Jansoulets the respect both of pupils and masters, were their purses heavy with gold, ever ready for school subscriptions, for the professors' birthdays, and the charity visits, those famous visits organized by the College Bourdaloue, one of the tempting things in the prospectus, the marvel of sensitive souls.

Twice a month, turn and turn about, the pupils who were members of the miniature Society of St. Vincent de Paul founded in the college upon the model of the great one, went in little squads, alone, as though they had been grown-up, to bear succour and consolation into the deepest recesses of the more densely populated quarters of the town. This was designed to teach them a practical charity,

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the art of knowing the needs, the miseries of the lower classes, and to heal these heart-rending evils by a nostrum of kind words and ecclesiastical maxims. To console, to evangelize the masses by the help of childhood, to disarm religious incredulity by the youth and *naïveté* of the apostles, such was the aim of this little society; an aim entirely missed, moreover. The children, healthy, well-dressed, well-fed, calling only at addresses previously selected, found poor persons of good appearance, sometimes rather unwell, but very clean, already on the parish register and in receipt of aid from the wealthy organization of the Church. Never did they chance to enter one of those nauseous dwellings wherein hunger, grief, humiliation, all physical and moral ills are written in leprous mould on the walls, in indelible lines on the brows. Their visits were prepared for, like that of the sovereign who enters a guard-room to taste the soldiers' soup: the guard-room is warmed and the soup seasoned for the royal palate. Have you seen those pictures in pious books, where a little communicant, with candle in hand, and perfectly groomed, comes to minister to a poor old man lying sick on his straw pallet and turning the whites of his eyes to heaven? These visits of charity had the same conventionality of setting and of accent. To the measured gestures of the little preachers were corresponding words learned by heart and false enough to make one squint. To the comic encouragement, to the "consolations lavished" in prize-book phrases by the voices of young urchins with colds, were the affecting benedictions, the whining and piteous mummeries of a church-porch after vespers. And the moment the young visitors departed, what an explosion of laughter and shouting in the garret, what a dance in a circle round the present brought, what an upsetting of the arm-chair in which one had pretended to be lying ill, of the medicine spilt in the fire, a fire of cinders very artistically prepared!

When the little Jansoulets went out to visit their parents at home, they were intrusted to the care of the man with the red fez, the indispensable Bompain. It was Bompain who conducted them to the Champs-Elysées, clad

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in English jackets, bowler hats of the latest fashion—at seven years old!—and carrying little canes in their dog-skin-gloved hands. It was Bompain who stuffed the race-wagonette with provisions. Here he mounted with the children, who, with their entrance-cards stuck in their hats round which green veils were twisted, looked very like those personages in Liliputian pantomimes whose entire funniness lies in the enormous size of their heads compared with their small legs and dwarf-like gestures. They smoked and drank; it was a painful sight. Sometimes the man in the fez, hardly able to hold himself upright, would bring them home frightfully sick. And yet Jansoulet was fond of them, the youngest especially, who, with his long hair, his doll-like manner, recalled to him the little Afchin passing in her carriage. But they were still of the age when children belong to the mother, when neither the fashionable tailor, nor the most accomplished masters, nor the smart boarding-school, nor the ponies girthed specially for the little men in the stable, nor anything else can replace the attentive and caressing hand, the warmth and the gaiety of the home-nest. The father could not give them that; and then, too, he was so busy!

A thousand irons in the fire: the Territorial Bank, the installation of the picture gallery, drives to Tattersall's with Bois l'Héry, some *bibelot* to inspect, here or there, at the houses of collectors indicated by Schwalbach, hours passed with trainers, jockeys, dealers in curiosities, the encumbered and multiple existence of a *bourgeois gentilhomme* in modern Paris. This rubbing of shoulders with all sorts and conditions of people brought him improvement, in that each day he was becoming a little more Parisianized; he was received at Monpavon's club, in the green-room of the ballet, behind the scenes at the theatres, and presided regularly at his famous bachelor luncheons, the only receptions possible in his household. His existence was really a very busy one, and de Géry relieved him of the heaviest part of it, the complicated department of appeals and of charities.

The young man now became acquainted with all the audacious and burlesque inventions, all the serio-comic com-

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was cut by Parisian society, and the old mother, down yonder at Saint-Romans, ever so happy in the successes of her son! Was that not worth a few millions cleverly squandered along the path of glory which the Nabob was treading like a child, all unconscious of the fate that lay waiting to devour him at its end? And in these external joys, these honours, this consideration so dearly bought, was there not a compensation for all the troubles of this Oriental won back to European life, who desired a home and possessed only a caravansary, looked for a wife and found only a Levantine?

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VIII

THE BETHLEHEM SOCIETY

BETHLEHEM! Why did it give one such a chill to see written in letters of gold over the iron gate that historic name, sweet and warm like the straw of the miraculous stable! Perhaps it was partly to be accounted for by the melancholy of the landscape, that immense gloomy plain which stretches from Nanterre to Saint Cloud, broken only by a few clumps of trees or the smoke of factory chimneys. Possibly also by the disproportion that existed between the humble little straggling village which you expected to find and the grandiose establishment, this country mansion in the style of Louis XIII, an agglomeration of mortar looking pink through the branches of its leafless park, ornamented with wide pieces of water thick with green weeds. What is certain is that as you passed this place your heart was conscious of an oppression. When you entered it was still worse. A heavy, inexplicable silence weighed on the house, and the faces you might see at the windows had a mournful air behind the little, old-fashioned greenish panes. The goats scattered along the paths nibbled languidly at the new spring grass, with "baas" at the woman who was tendering them, and looked bored, as she followed the visitors with a lack-lustre eye. A mournfulness was over the place, like the terror of a contagion. Yet it had been a cheerful house, and one where even recently there had been high junketings. Replanted with timber for the famous singer who had sold it to Jenkins, it revealed clearly the kind of imagination which is characteristic of the opera-house in a bridge flung over the miniature lake, with its broken punt half filled with mouldy leaves, and in its pavilion all of rockery-work, garlanded by ivy. It had wit-

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nessed gay scenes, this pavilion, in the singer's time; now it looked on sad ones, for the infirmary was installed in it.

To tell the truth, the whole establishment was one vast infirmary. The children had hardly arrived when they fell ill, languished, and ended by dying, if their parents did not quickly take them away and put them again under the protection of home. The curé of Nanterre had to go so often to Bethlehem with his black vestments and his silver cross, the undertaker had so many orders from the house, that it became known in the district, and indignant mothers shook their fists at the model nurse; from a long way off, it is true, for they might chance to have in their arms pink-and-white babies to be preserved from all the contagions of the place. It was these things that gave to the poor place so heart-rending an aspect. A house in which children die cannot be gay; you cannot see trees break into flower there, birds building, streams flowing like rippling laughter.

The thing seemed altogether false. Excellent in itself, Jenkins's scheme was difficult, almost impracticable in its application. Yet, God knows, the affair had been started and carried out with the greatest enthusiasm to the last details, with as much money and as large a staff as were requisite. At its head, one of the most skilful of practitioners, M. Pondevèz, who had studied in the Paris hospitals; and by his side, to attend to the more intimate needs of the children, a trusty matron, Mme. Polge. Then there were nursemaids, seamstresses, infirmary-nurses. And how many the arrangements and how thorough was the maintenance of the establishment, from the water distributed by a regular system from fifty taps to the omnibus trotting off with jingling of its posting bells to meet every train of the day at Rueil station! Finally, magnificent goats Thibetan goats, silky, swollen with milk. In regard to organization, everything was admirable; but there was a point where all failed. This artificial feeding, so greatly extolled by the advertisements, did not agree with the children. It was a singular piece of obstinacy, a word which seemed to have been passed between them by a

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signal, poor little things! for they couldn't yet speak, most of them indeed were never to speak at all: "Please, we will not suck the goats." And they did not suck them, they preferred to die one after another rather than suck them. Was Jesus of Bethlehem in his stable suckled by a goat? On the contrary, did he not press a woman's soft breast, on which he could go to sleep when he was satisfied? Who ever saw a goat between the ox and the ass of the story on that night when the beasts spoke to each other? Then why lie about it, why call the place Bethlehem?

The director had been moved at first by the spectacle of so many victims. This Pondevèz, a waif of the life of the "Quarter," mere student still after twenty years, and well known in all the resorts of the Boulevard St. Michel under the name of Pompon, was not an unkind man. When he perceived the small success of the artificial feeding, he simply brought in four or five vigorous nurses from the district around and the children's appetites soon returned. This humane impulse went near costing him his place.

"Nurses at Bethlehem!" said Jenkins, furious, when he came to pay his weekly visit. "Are you out of your mind? Well! why then have we goats at all, and meadows to pasture them; what becomes of my idea, and the pamphlets upon my idea? What happens to all that? But you are going against my system. You are stealing the founder's money."

"All the same, *mon cher maître*," the student tried to reply, passing his hands through his long red beard, "all the same, they will not take this nourishment."

"Well, then, let them go without, but let the principle of artificial lactation be respected. That is the whole point. I do not wish to have to repeat it to you again. Send off these wretched nurses. For the rearing of our children we have goats' milk, cows' milk in case of absolute necessity. I can make no further concession in the matter."

He added, with an assumption of his apostle's air: "We are here for the demonstration of a philanthropic idea. It

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must be made to triumph, even at the price of some sacrifices."

Pondevèz insisted no further. After all the place was a good one, near enough to Paris to allow of descents upon Nanterre of a Sunday from the Quarter, or to allow the director to pay a visit to his old *brasseries*. Mme. Polge, to whom Jenkins always referred as "our intelligent superintendent," and whom he had placed there to superintend everything, and chiefly the director himself, was not so austere as her prerogatives might have led one to suppose, and submitted willingly to a few liqueur-glasses of cognac or to a game of bezique. He dismissed the nurses, therefore, and endeavoured to harden himself in advance to everything that could happen. What did happen? A veritable Massacre of the Innocents. Consequently the few parents in fairly easy circumstances, workpeople or suburban tradesfolk, who, tempted by the advertisements, had severed themselves from their children, very soon took them home again, and there only remained in the establishment some little unfortunates picked up on doorsteps or in out-of-the-way places, sent from the foundling hospitals, doomed to all evil things from their birth. As the mortality continued to increase, even these came to be scarce, and the omnibus which had posted to the railway station would return bouncing and light as an empty hearse. How long would the thing last? How long would the twenty-five or thirty little ones who remained take to die? This was what Monsieur the Director, or rather, to give him the nickname which he had himself invented, Monsieur the Grantor-of-Certificates-of-Death Pondevèz, was asking himself one morning as he sat opposite Mme. Polge's venerable ringlets, taking a hand in this lady's favourite game.

"Yes, my good Mme. Polge, what is to become of us? Things cannot go on much longer as they are. Jenkins will not give way; the children are as obstinate as mules. There is no denying it, they will all slip through our fingers. There is the little Wallachian—I mark the king, Mme. Polge—who may die from one moment to another. Just think, the poor little chap for the last three days has had nothing

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in his stomach. It is useless for Jenkins to talk. You cannot improve children like snails by making them go hungry. It is disheartening all the same not to be able to save one of them. The infirmary is full. It is really a wretched outlook. Forty and bezique."

A double ring at the entrance gate interrupted his monologue. The omnibus was returning from the railway station and its wheels were grinding on the sand in an unusual manner.

"What an astonishing thing," remarked Pondevèz, "the conveyance is not empty."

Indeed it did draw up at the foot of the steps with a certain pride, and the man who got out of it sprang up the staircase at a bound. He was a courier from Jenkins bearing a great piece of news. The doctor would arrive in two hours to visit the Home, accompanied by the Nabob and a gentleman from the Tuileries. He urgently enjoined that everything should be ready for their reception. The thing had been decided at such short notice that he had not had the time to write; but he counted on M. Pondevèz to do all that was necessary.

"That is good!—necessary!" murmured Pondevèz in complete dismay. The situation was critical. This important visit was occurring at the worst possible moment, just as the system had utterly broken down. The poor Pompon, exceedingly perplexed, tugged at his beard, thoughtfully gnawing wisps of it.

"Come," said he suddenly to Mme. Polge, whose long face had grown still longer between her ringlets, "we have only one course to take. We must remove the infirmary and carry all the sick into the dormitory. They will be neither better nor worse for passing another half-day there. As for those with the rash, we will put them out of the way in some corner. They are too ugly, they must not be seen. Come along, you up there! I want every one on the bridge."

The dinner-bell being violently rung, immediately hurried steps are heard. Seamstresses, infirmary-nurses, servants, goatherds, issue from all directions, running, jos-

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tling each other across the court-yards. Orders fly about, cries, calls; but that which dominates is the noise of a mighty cleansing, a streaming of water as though Bethlehem had been suddenly attacked by fire. And those groanings of sick children snatched from the warmth of their beds, all those little screaming bundles carried across the damp park, their coverings fluttering through the branches, powerfully complete the impression of a fire. At the end of two hours, thanks to a prodigious activity, the house is ready from top to bottom for the visit which it is about to receive, all the staff at their posts, the stove lighted, the goats picturesquely sprinkled over the park. Mme. Polge has donned her green silk dress, the director a costume somewhat less *négligé* than usual, but of which the simplicity excluded all idea of premeditation. The Departmental Secretary may come.

And here he is.

He alights with Jenkins and Jansoulet from a splendid coach with the red and gold livery of the Nabob. Feigning the deepest astonishment, Pondevèz rushes forward to meet his visitors.

"Ah, M. Jenkins, what an honour! What a surprise!"

Greetings are exchanged on the flight of steps, bows, shakings of hands, introductions. Jenkins with his flowing overcoat wide open over his loyal breast, beams his best and most cordial smile; there is a significant wrinkle on his brow, however. He is uneasy about the surprises which may be held in store for them by the establishment, of the distressful condition of which he is better aware than any one. If only Pondevèz has taken proper precautions. Things begin well, at any rate. The rather theatrical view from the entrance, of those white fleeces frisking about among the bushes, have enchanted M. de la Perrière, who himself, with his honest eyes, his little white beard, and the continual nodding of his head, resembles a goat escaped from its tether.

"In the first place, gentlemen, the apartment of principal importance in the house, the nursery," said the director,

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opening a massive door at the end of the entrance-hall. His guests follow him, go down a few steps and find themselves in an immense, low room with a tiled floor, formerly the kitchen of the mansion. The most striking object on entering is a lofty and vast fireplace built on the antique model, of red brick, with two stone benches opposite one another beneath the chimney, and the singer's coat-of-arms —an enormous lyre barred with a roll of music—carved on the monumental pediment. The effect is startling; but a frightful draught comes from it, which joined to the coldness of the tiled floor and the dull light admitted by the little windows on a level with the ground, may well terrify one for the health of the children. But what was to be done? The nursery had to be installed in this insalubrious spot on account of the sylvan and capricious nurses, accustomed to the unconstraint of the stable. You only need to notice the pools of milk, the great reddish puddles drying up on the tiles, to breathe in the strong odour that meets you as you enter, a mingling of whey, of wet hair, and of many other things besides, in order to be convinced of the absolute necessity of this arrangement.

The gloomy-walled apartment is so large that to the visitors at first the nursery seems to be deserted. However, at the farther end, a group of creatures, bleating, moaning, moving about, is soon distinguished. Two peasant women, hard and brutalized in appearance, with dirty faces, two "dry-nurses," who well deserve the name, are seated on mats, each with an infant in her arms and a big nanny-goat in front of her, offering its udder with legs parted. The director seems pleasantly surprised.

"Truly, gentlemen, this is lucky. Two of our children are having their little luncheon. We shall see how well the nurses and infants understand each other."

"What can he be doing? He is mad," said Jenkins to himself in consternation.

But the director on the contrary knows very well what he is doing and has himself skilfully arranged the scene, selecting two patient and gentle beasts and two exceptional subjects, two little desperate mortals who want to live at

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any price and open their mouths to swallow, no matter what food, like young birds still in the nest.

"Come nearer, gentlemen, and observe."

Yes, they are indeed sucking, these little cherubs! One of them, lying close to the ground, squeezed up under the belly of the goat, is going at it so heartily that you can hear the gurglings of the warm milk descending, it would seem, even into the little limbs that kick with satisfaction at the meal. The other, calmer, lying down indolently, requires some little encouragement from his Auvergnoise attendant.

"Suck, will you suck then, you little rogue!" And at length, as though he had suddenly come to a decision, he begins to drink with such avidity that the woman leans over to him, surprised by this extraordinary appetite, and exclaims laughing:

"Ah, the rascal, is he not cunning?—it is his thumb that he is sucking instead of the goat."

The angel has hit on that expedient so that he may be left in peace. The incident does not create a bad impression. M. de la Perrière is much amused by this notion of the nurse that the child was trying to take them all in. He leaves the nursery, delighted. "Positively de-e-elighted," he repeats, nodding his head as they ascend the great staircase with its echoing walls decorated with the horns of stags, leading to the dormitory.

Very bright, very airy, is this vast room, running the whole length of one side of the house, with numerous windows and cots, separated one from another by a little distance, hung with fleecy white curtains like clouds. Women go and come through the large arch in the centre, with piles of linen on their arms, or keys in their hands, nurses with the special duty of washing the babies.

Here too much has been attempted and the first impression of the visitors is a bad one. All this whiteness of muslin, this polished parquet, the brightness of the window-panes reflecting the sky sad at beholding these things, seem to throw into bold relief the thinness, the unhealthy pallor of these dying little ones, already the colour of their shrouds. Alas!

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the oldest are only aged some six months, the youngest barely a fortnight, and already there is in all these faces, these faces in embryo, a disappointed expression, a scowling, worn look, a suffering precocity visible in the numerous lines on those little bald foreheads, cramped by linen caps edged with poor, narrow hospital lace. What are they suffering? What diseases have they? They have everything, everything that one can have: diseases of children and diseases of men. The fruit of vice and poverty, they bring into the world hideous phenomena of heredity at their very birth. This one has a perforated palate, and this great copper-coloured patches on the forehead, all of them rickety. Then they are dying of hunger. Notwithstanding the spoonfuls of milk, of sweetened water, which are forced down their throats, notwithstanding the feeding-bottle employed now and then, though against orders, they perish of inanition. These little creatures, worn out before birth, require the most tender and the most strengthening food; the goats might perhaps be able to give it, but apparently they have sworn not to suck the goats. And this is what makes the dormitory mournful and silent, not one of those little clinched-fisted tempers, one of those cries showing the pink and firm gums in which the child makes trial of his lungs and strength; only a plaintive moaning, as it were the disquiet of a soul that turns over and over in a little sick body, without being able to find a comfortable place to rest there.

Jenkins and the director, who have seen the bad impression produced on their guests by this inspection of the dormitory, try to put a little life into the situation, talk very loudly in a good-natured, complacent, satisfied way. Jenkins shakes hands warmly with the superintendent.

"Well, Mme. Polge, and how are our little nurslings getting on?"

"As you see, M. le Docteur," she replies, pointing to the beds.

This tall Mme. Polge is funereal in her green dress, the ideal of dry-nurses. She completes the picture.

But where has Monsieur the Departmental Secretary

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gone? He has stopped before a cot which he examines sadly, as he stands nodding his head.

"*Bigre de bigre!*" says Pompon in a low voice to Mme. Polge. "It is the Wallachian."

The little blue placard hung over the cot, as in the foundling hospitals, states the child's nationality: "Moldo, Wallachian." What a piece of ill-luck that Monsieur the Secretary's attention should have been attracted to that particular child! Oh, that poor little head lying on the pillow, its linen cap askew, with pinched nostrils, and mouth half opened by a quick, panting respiration, the breathing of the newly born, of those also who are about to die.

"Is he ill?" asks Monsieur the Secretary softly of the director, who has come up to him.

"Not the least in the world," the shameless Pompon replies, and, advancing to the side of the cot, he tries to make the little one laugh by tickling him with his finger, straightens the pillow, and says in a hearty voice, somewhat overcharged with tenderness: "Well, old fellow?" Shaken out of his torpor, escaping for a moment from the shades which already are closing on him, the child opens his eyes on those faces leaning over him, glances at them with a gloomy indifference, then, returning to his dream which he finds more interesting, clinches his little wrinkled hands and heaves an elusive sigh. Mystery! Who shall say for what end that baby had been born into life? To suffer for two months and to depart without having seen anything, understood anything, without any one even knowing the sound of his voice.

"How pale he is!" murmurs M. de la Perrière, very pale himself. The Nabob is livid also. A cold breath seems to have passed over the place. The director assumes an air of unconcern.

"It is the reflection. We are all of us green here."

"Yes, yes, that is so," remarks Jenkins, "it is the reflection of the lake. Come and look, Monsieur the Secretary." And he draws him to the window to point out to him the large sheet of water with its dipping willows, while Mme. Polge makes haste to draw over the eternal dream of the little Wallachian the parted curtains of his cradle.

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The inspection of the establishment must be continued very quickly in order to destroy this unfortunate impression.

To begin with, M. de la Perrière is shown a splendid laundry, with stoves, drying-rooms, thermometers, immense presses of polished walnut, full of babies' caps and frocks, labelled and tied up in dozens. When the linen has been warmed, the linen-room maid passes it out through a little door in exchange for the number left by the nurse. A perfect order reigns, one can see, and everything, down to its healthy smell of soap-suds, gives to this apartment a wholesome and rural aspect. There is clothing here for five hundred children. That is the number which Bethlehem can accommodate, and everything has been arranged upon a corresponding scale; the vast pharmacy, glittering with bottles and Latin inscriptions, pestles and mortars of marble in every corner, the hydropathic installation, its large rooms built of stone, with gleaming baths possessing a huge apparatus including pipes of all dimensions for douches, upward and downward, spray, jet, or whip-lash, and the kitchens adorned with superb kettles of copper, and with economical coal and gas ovens. Jenkins wished to institute a model establishment; and he found the thing easy, for the work was done on a large scale, as it can be when funds are not lacking. You feel also over it all the experience and the iron hand of "our intelligent superintendent," to whom the director cannot refrain from paying a public tribute. This is the signal for general congratulations. M. de la Perrière, delighted with the manner in which the establishment is equipped, congratulates Dr. Jenkins upon his fine creation, Jenkins compliments his friend Pondevèz, who, in his turn, thanks the Departmental Secretary for having consented to honour Bethlehem with a visit. The good Nabob makes his voice heard in this chorus of eulogy, finds a kind word for each one, but is a little surprised all the same that he has not also been congratulated himself, since they were about it. It is true that the best of congratulations awaits him on the 16th March on the front page of the *Official Journal* in a decree which flames in advance be-

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fore his eyes and makes him glance every now and then at his buttonhole.

These pleasant words are exchanged as the party passes along a big corridor in which the voices ring out in all their honest accents; but suddenly a frightful noise interrupts the conversation and the advance of the visitors. It seems to be made up of the mewing of cats in delirium, of bellowings, of the howlings of savages performing a war-dance, an appalling tempest of human cries, reverberated, swelled, and prolonged by the echoing vaults. It rises and falls, ceases suddenly, then goes on again with an extraordinary effect of unanimity.

Monsieur the Director begins to be uneasy, makes an inquiry. Jenkins rolls furious eyes.

"Let us go on," says the director, rather anxious this time. "I know what it is."

He knows what it is; but M. de la Perrière wishes to know also what it is, and, before Pondevèz has had the time to unfasten it, he pushes open the massive door whence this horrible concert proceeds.

In a sordid kennel which the great cleansing has passed over, for, in fact, it was not intended to be exhibited, on mattresses ranged on the floor, a dozen little wretches are laid, watched over by an empty chair on which the beginning of a knitted vest lies with an air of dignity, and by a little broken saucepan, full of hot wine, boiling on a smoky wood fire. These are the children with ringworm, with rashes, the disfavoured of Bethlehem, who had been hidden in this retired corner with recommendation to their dry-nurse to rock them, to soothe them, to sit on them, if need were, in order to keep them from crying; but whom this countrywoman, stupid and inquisitive, had left alone there in order to see the fine carriage standing in the court-yard. Her back turned, the infants had very quickly grown weary of their horizontal position; and then all these little scrofulous patients raised their lusty concert, for they, by a miracle, are strong, their malady saves and nourishes them. Bewildered and kicking like beetles when they are turned on their backs, helping themselves with their hips and their elbows, some

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fallen on one side and unable to regain their balance, others raising in the air their little benumbed, swaddled legs, spontaneously they cease their gesticulations and cries as they see the door open; but M. de la Perrière's nodding goatee beard reassures them, encourages them anew, and in the renewed tumult the explanation given by the director is only heard with difficulty: "Children kept separate—Contagion—Skin-diseases." This is quite enough for Monsieur the Departmental Secretary; less heroic than Bonaparte on his visit to the plague-stricken of Jaffa, he hastens towards the door, and in his timid anxiety, wishing to say something and yet not finding words, murmurs with an ineffable smile: "They are char-ar-ming."

Next, the inspection at an end, see them all gathered in the salon on the ground floor, where Mme. Polge has prepared a little luncheon. The cellar of Bethlehem is well stocked. The keen air of the table-land, these climbs up and downstairs have given the old gentleman from the Tuileries an appetite such as he has not known for a long time, so that he chats and laughs as if he were at a picnic, and at the moment of departure, as they are all standing, raises his glass, nodding his head, to drink, "To Be-Be-Bethlehem!" Those present are moved, glasses are touched, then, at a quick trot, the carriage bears the party away down the long avenue of limes, over which a red and cold sun is just setting. Behind them the park resumes its dismal silence. Great dark masses gather in the depths of the copses, surround the house, gain little by little the paths and open spaces. Soon all is lost in gloom save the ironical letters embossed above the entrance-gate, and, away over yonder, at a first-floor window, one red and wavering spot, the light of a candle burning by the pillow of the dead child.

"By a decree dated the 12th March, 1865, issued upon the proposal of the Minister of the Interior, Monsieur the Doctor Jenkins, President and Founder of the Bethlehem Society, is named a Chevalier of the Imperial Order of the Legion of Honour. Great devotion to the cause of humanity."

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As he read these words on the front page of the *Official Journal*, on the morning of the 16th, the poor Nabob felt dazed.

Was it possible?

Jenkins decorated, and not he!

He read the paragraph twice over, distrusting his own eyes. His ears buzzed. The letters danced double before his eyes with those great red rings round them which they have in strong sunlight. He had been so confident of seeing his name in this place; Jenkins, only the evening before, had repeated to him with so much assurance, "It is already done!" that he still thought his eyes must have deceived him. But no, it was indeed Jenkins. The blow was heavy, deep, prophetic, as it were a first warning from destiny, and one that was felt all the more intensely because for years this man had been unaccustomed to failure. Everything good in him learned mistrust at the same time.

"Well," said he to de Géry as he came as usual every morning into his room, and found him visibly affected, holding the newspaper in his hand, "you have seen? I am not in the *Official*."

He tried to smile, his features puckered like those of a child restraining his tears. Then, suddenly, with that frankness which was such a pleasing quality in him: "It is a great disappointment to me. I was looking forward to it too confidently."

The door opened upon these words, and Jenkins rushed in, out of breath, stammering, extraordinarily agitated.

"It is an infamy, a frightful infamy! The thing cannot be, it shall not be!"

The words stumbled over each other in disorder on his lips, all trying to get out at once; then he seemed to despair of finding expression for his thoughts and in disgust threw on the table a small box and a large envelope, both bearing the stamp of the chancellor's office.

"There are my cross and my brevet. They are yours, friend. I could not keep them."

At bottom, the words did not signify much. Jansoulet adorning himself with Jenkins's ribbon might very well

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have been guilty of illegality. But a piece of theatrical business is not necessarily logical; this one brought about between the two men an effusion of feeling, embraces, a generous battle, at the end of which Jenkins replaced the objects in his pocket, speaking of protests, letters to the newspapers. The Nabob was again obliged to check him.

"Be very careful you do no such thing. To begin with, it would be to injure my chances for another time—who knows, perhaps on the 15th of August, which will soon be here."

"Oh, as to that," said Jenkins, jumping at this idea, and stretching out his arm as in the *Oath* of David, "I solemnly swear it."

The matter was dropped at this point. At luncheon the Nabob was as gay as usual. This good humour was maintained all day, and de Géry, for whom the scene had been a revelation of the true Jenkins, the explanation of the ironies and the restrained wrath of Félicia Ruys whenever she spoke of the doctor, asked himself in vain how he could enlighten his dear patron about such hypocrisy. He should have been aware, however, that in southerners, with all their superficiality and effusion, there is no blindness, no enthusiasm, so complete as to remain insensible before the wisdom of reflection. In the evening the Nabob had opened a shabby little letter-case, worn at the corners, in which for ten years he had been accustomed to work out the calculations of his millions, writing down in hieroglyphics understood only by himself his receipts and expenditures. He buried himself in his accounts for a moment, then turning to de Géry:

"Do you know what I am doing, my dear Paul?" he asked.

"No, sir."

"I am just calculating"—and his mocking glance thoroughly characteristic of his race, rallied the good nature of his smile—"I am just calculating that I have spent four hundred and thirty thousand francs to get a decoration for Jenkins."

Four hundred and thirty thousand francs! And that was not the end.

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IX

BONNE MAMAN

PAUL DE GÉRY went three times a week in the evening to take his lesson in bookkeeping in the Joyeuses' dining-room, not far from that little parlour in which he had seen the family the first day, and while with his eyes fixed on his teacher he was being initiated into all the mysteries of "debtor and creditor," he used to listen, in spite of himself, for the light sounds coming from the industrious group behind the door, with thoughts dwelling regretfully on the vision of all those pretty brows bent in the lamplight. M. Joyeuse never said a word of his daughters; jealous of their charms as a dragon watching over beautiful princesses in a tower, and excited by the fantastic imaginings of his excessive affection for them, he would answer with marked brevity the inquiries of his pupil regarding the health of "the young ladies," so that at last the young man ceased to mention them.

He was surprised, however, at not once seeing that Bonne Maman whose name was constantly recurring in the conversation of M. Joyeuse, entering into the least details of his existence, hovering over the household like the emblem of its perfect ordering and of its peace.

So great a reserve on the part of a venerable lady who must assuredly have passed the age at which the interest of young men is to be feared, seemed to him exaggerated. The lessons, however, were good ones, given with great clearness, the teacher having an excellent system of demonstration, and only one fault, that of becoming absorbed in silences, broken by sudden starts and exclamations let off like rockets. Apart from this, he was the best of masters, intelligent, patient, and conscientious, and Paul learned to

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know his way through the complex labyrinth of commercial books and resigned himself to ask nothing beyond.

One evening, towards nine o'clock, as the young man had risen to go, M. Joyeuse asked him if he would do him the honour of taking a cup of tea with his family, a custom dating from the time when Mme. Joyeuse, *née* de Saint-Amand, was alive, she having been used to receive her friends on Thursdays. Since her death and the change in the financial position, the friends had become dispersed; but this little weekly function had been kept up.

Paul having accepted, the good old fellow opened the door and called:

"Bonne Maman!"

An alert footstep in the passage, and immediately the face of a girl of twenty, in a halo of abundant brown hair, made its appearance.

De Géry, stupefied, looked at M. Joyeuse.

"Bonne Maman?"

"Yes, it is a name that we gave her when she was a little girl. With her frilled cap, her authority as the eldest child, she had a quaint little air. We thought her like her grandmother. The name has clung to her."

From the honest fellow's tone as he spoke thus, one felt that to him this grandparent's title applied to such an embodiment of attractive youth seemed the most natural thing in the world. Every one else thought as he did on the point; both her sisters, who had hastened to their father's side, grouping themselves round him somewhat as in the portrait exhibited in the window on the ground floor, and the old servant who placed on the table in the little drawing-room a magnificent tea-service, a relic of the former splendours of the household. Every one called the girl "Bonne Maman" without her ever once having grown tired of it, the influence of that sacred title touching the affection of each one with a deference which flattered her and gave to her ideal authority a singular gentleness of protection.

Whether or not it were by reason of this appellation of grandmother which as a child he had learned to reverence, de Géry felt an inexpressible attraction towards this young

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girl. It was not like the sudden shock which he had received from that other, that emotional agitation in which were mingled the desire to flee, to escape from a possession and the persistent melancholy of the morrow of a festivity, extinguished candles, the lost refrains of songs, perfumes vanished into the night. In the presence of this young girl as she stood superintending the family table, seeing if anything were wanting, enveloping her children, her grandchildren, with the active tenderness of her eyes, there came to him a longing to know her, to be counted among her old friends, to confide to her things which he confessed only to himself; and when she offered him his cup of tea without any of the mincings of society or drawing-room affectations, he would have liked to say with the rest a "Thank you, Bonne Maman," in which he would have put all his heart.

Suddenly, a cheerful knock at the door made everybody start.

"Ah, here comes M. André. Élise, a cup quickly. Jaia, the little cakes." At the same time, Mlle. Henriette, the third of M. Joyeuse's daughters, who had inherited from her mother, *née* de Saint-Amand, a certain instinct for society, observing the number of visitors who seemed likely to crowd their rooms that evening, rushed to light the two candles on the piano.

"My fifth act is finished," cried the newcomer as he entered, then he stopped short. "Ah, pardon," and his face assumed a rather discomfited expression in the presence of the stranger. M. Joyeuse introduced them to each other: "M. Paul de Géry—M. André Maranne," not without a certain solemnity. He remembered the receptions held formerly by his wife, and the vases on the chimneypiece, the two large lamps, the what-not; the easy chairs grouped in a circle had an air of joining in this illusion, and seemed more brilliant by reason of this unaccustomed throng.

"So your play is finished?"

"Finished, M. Joyeuse, and I hope to read it to you one of these evenings."

"Oh, yes, M. André. Oh, yes," said all the girls in chorus.

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Their neighbour was in the habit of writing for the stage, and no one here doubted of his success. Photography, in any case, promised fewer profits. Clients were very rare, passers-by little disposed to business. To keep his hand in and to save his new apparatus from rusting, M. André was accustomed to practise anew on the family of his friends on each succeeding Sunday. They lent themselves to his experiments with unequalled long-suffering; the prosperity of this suburban photographer's business was for them all an affair of *amour propre*, and awakened, even in the girls, that touching confraternity of feeling which draws together the destinies of people as insignificant in importance as sparrows on a roof. André Maranne, with the inexhaustible resources of his great brow full of illusion, used to explain without bitterness the indifference of the public. Sometimes the season was unfavourable, or, again, people were complaining of the bad state of business generally, and he would always end with the same consoling reflection, "When *Revolt* is produced!" That was the title of his play.

"It is surprising all the same," said the fourth of M. Joyeuse's daughters, twelve years old, with her hair in a pigtail, "it is surprising that with such a good balcony so little business should result."

"And, then, many people are constantly passing down this street," adds Élise with assurance. Bonne Maman points out to her with a smile that the same is still more true of the Boulevard des Italiens.

"Ah, if he were established on the Boulevard des Italiens," remarks M. Joyeuse thoughtfully, and he is launched forth!—riding his chimera till it is brought to the ground suddenly with a gesture and these words uttered sadly: "Closed on account of bankruptcy." In the space of a moment the terrible visionary has just installed his friend in splendid quarters on the Boulevard, where he gains enormous sums of money, at the same time, however, increasing his expenditure to so disproportionate an extent that a fearful failure in a few months engulfs both photographer and his photography. They laugh heartily when he gives this

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explanation; but all agree that the Rue Saint-Ferdinand, although less brilliant, is much more to be depended upon than the Boulevard des Italiens. Besides, it happens to be quite near the Bois de Boulogne, and if once the fashionable world got into the way of passing through it— That exalted society which was so much sought by her mother, is Mlle. Henriette's fixed idea, and she is astonished that the thought of receiving "le high-life" in his little apartment on the fifth floor makes their neighbour laugh. The other week, however, a carriage with livery had called on him. Only just now, too, he had a very "swell" visit.

"Oh, quite a great lady!" interrupts Bonne Maman. "We were at the window on the lookout for father. We saw her alight from her carriage and look at the show-frame; we made sure that her visit was for you."

"It was for me," said André, a little embarrassed.

"For a moment we were afraid that she was going to pass on like so many others, on account of your five flights of stairs. So all four of us tried to attract her without her knowing it by the magnetism of our four staring pairs of eyes. We drew her gently by the feathers of her hat and the laces of her cape. 'Come up then, madame, come up,' and finally she entered. There is so much magnetism in eyes that are kindly disposed."

Magnetism she certainly had, the dear creature, not only in her glances, indeterminate of colour, veiled or gay like the sky of her Paris, but in her voice, in the draping of her dress, in everything about her, even to the long curl, falling over the neck erect and delicate as a statue's.

Tea having been served, while the gentlemen finished their cups and talked—old Joyeuse was always very long over everything that he did, by reason of his sudden expeditions to the moon—the girls brought out their work, the table became covered with wicker baskets, embroideries, pretty wools that rejuvenated with their bright tints the faded flowers of the old carpet, and the group of the other evening gathered once more within the bright circle defined by the lamp-shade, to the great satisfaction of Paul de Géry. It was the first evening of the kind that he had

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spent in Paris; it recalled to him others of a like sort very far away, lulled by the same innocent laughter, the peaceful sound produced by scissors as they are put down on the table, by a needle as it pierces through linen, or the rustle of a page turned over, and dear faces, disappeared for ever, gathered also around the family lamp, alas! so abruptly extinguished.

Having been admitted to this charming intimacy, he remained in it, took his lessons in the presence of the girls and was encouraged to chat with them when the good old man closed his big book. Here everything rested him after the whirl of that life into which he was thrown by the luxurious social existence of the Nabob; he came to renew his strength in this atmosphere of honesty, of simplicity, tried, too, to find healing there for the wounds with which a hand more indifferent than cruel stabbed his heart mercilessly.

"Some women have hated me, other women have loved me. She who has hurt me most never either loved or hated me." Paul had met that woman of whom Henri Heine speaks. Félicia was full of welcome and cordiality for him. There was no one whom she treated with more favour. She used to reserve for him a special smile wherein one felt the kindliness of an artist's eye arrested by and dwelling on a pleasing type, and the satisfaction of a jaded mind amused by anything new, however simple in appearance it may be. She liked that reserve, suggestive in a southerner, the honesty of that judgment, independent of every artistic or social formula and enlivened by a touch of provincial accent. These things were a change for her from the zigzag stroke of the thumb illustrating a eulogy with its gesture of the studio, from the compliments of comrades on the way in which she would snub some old fellow, or again from those affected admirations, from the "char-ar-ming, very nice indeed's" with which young men about town, sucking the knobs of their canes, were accustomed to regale her. This young man at any rate did not say such things as that to her. She had nicknamed him Minerva, on account of his apparent tranquility and the regularity of his

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profile; and the moment she saw him, however far-off, she would call:

"Ah, here comes Minerva. Hail, beautiful Minerva! Put down your helmet and let us have a chat."

But this familiar, almost fraternal, tone convinced the young man of the uselessness of his love. He was deeply conscious that he would make no further advance into that feminine comradeship in which tenderness was wanting, and that he lost each day something of his charm—the charm of the unforeseen—in the eyes of that woman born weary, who seemed to have already lived her life and found in all that she heard or saw the insipidity of a repetition. Félicia was bored. Her art alone could distract her, carry her away, transport her into a dazzling fairyland, whence she would fall back worn out, surprised each time by this awakening like a physical fall. She used to draw a comparison between herself and those jelly-fish whose transparent brilliancy, so much alive in the cool movements of the waves, drift to their death on the shore in little gelatinous pools. During those times void of inspiration, when the artist's hand was heavy on his instrument, Félicia, deprived of the one moral support of her intellectual being, became unsociable, unapproachable, a tormenting mocker—the revenge taken of human weakness on the tired brains of genius. After having brought tears to the eyes of every one who cared for her, raking up painful recollections or enervating anxieties, she reached the lowest depths of her fatigue, and as there was always some fun in her, even in her saddest moods, she would give vent to the remainder of her *ennui* in a kind of caged wild-beast's howl, which she called "the cry of the jackal in the desert," and which used to make the good Crenmitz turn pale.

Poor Félicia! That life of hers was indeed a frightful desert when art did not beguile it with its illusions; a desert mournful and flat, where everything was lost, reduced to one level, beneath the same monotonous immensity, the naïve love of a child of twenty, a passionate duke's caprice, in which all was overwhelmed by an arid sand driven by blasting fates. Paul was conscious of that void, desired to

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escape it; but something held him back, like a weight which unrolls a chain, and in spite of the calumnies he heard, and notwithstanding the odd whims of the strange creature, he dallied deliciously after her, at the price of bearing away with him from this long lover's contemplation only the despair of a believer reduced to the adoring of images alone.

The refuge lay down there, in that remote quarter of the town where the wind blew so hard, yet without preventing the flame from mounting white and straight—it was the family circle presided over by Bonne Maman. Oh! she at least was not bored, she never uttered the cry of the "jackal in the desert." Her life was far too full; the father to encourage, to sustain, the children to teach, all the material cares of a home where the mother's hand is wanting, those preoccupations that awake with the dawn and are put to sleep by the evening, unless indeed it bring them back in dream, one of those devotions, tireless but without apparent effort, very pleasant for poor human egotism, because they dispense from all gratitude and hardly make themselves felt, so light is their hand. She was not the courageous daughter who works to support her parents, gives private lessons from morning to night, forgets in the excitement of a profession all the troubles of the household. No, she had understood her task in a different sense, a sedentary bee restricting her cares to the hive, without once humming out of doors in the open air among the flowers. A thousand functions: tailoress, milliner, mender of clothes, bookkeeper also for M. Joyeuse, who, incapable of all responsibility, left to her the free disposal of their means, to be pianoforte-teacher, governess.

As it happens in families that have been in a good position, Aline, as the eldest daughter, had been educated at one of the best boarding-schools in Paris. Élise had been with her there for two years; but the last two, born too late, and sent to small day-schools in the locality, had all their studies yet to complete, and this was no easy matter, the youngest laughing upon every occasion from sheer good health, warbling like a lark intoxicated with the delight of green

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corn, and flying away far out of sight of desk and exercises, while Mlle. Henriette, ever haunted by her ideas of grandeur, her love of luxurious things, took to work hardly less unwillingly. This young person of fifteen, to whom her father had transmitted something of his imaginative faculties, was already arranging her life in advance and declared formally that she should marry one of the nobility, and would never have more than three children: "A boy to inherit the name and two little girls—so as to be able to dress them alike."

"Yes, that's right," Bonne Maman would say, "you shall dress them alike. In the meantime, let us attend to our participles a little."

But the one who caused the most concern was Élise, with her examination taken thrice without success, always failing in history and preparing herself anew, seized by a deep fear and a mistrust of herself which made her carry about with her everywhere and open every moment that unfortunate history of France, in the omnibus, in the street, even at the luncheon-table; she was already a grown girl and very pretty, and she no longer possessed that little mechanical memory of childhood wherein dates and events lodge themselves for the whole of one's life. Beset by other preoccupations, the lesson was forgotten in an instant, despite the apparent application of the pupil, with her long lashes fringing her eyes, her curls sweeping over the pages, and her rosy mouth animated by a little quiver of attention, repeating ten times in succession: "Louis, surnamed le Hutin, 1314–1316; Philip V, surnamed the Long, 1316–1322. Ah, Bonne Maman, it's no good; I shall never know them." Whereupon Bonne Maman would come to her assistance, help her to concentrate her attention, to store up a few of those dates of the Middle Ages, barbarous and sharp as the helmets of the warriors of the period. And in the intervals of these occupations, of this general and constant superintendence, she yet found time to do some pretty needlework, to extract from her work-basket some delicate crochet lace or the piece of tapestry on which she was engaged and to which she clung as closely as the young Élise

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to her history of France. Even when she talked, her fingers never remained unoccupied for a moment.

"Do you never take any rest?" said de Géry to her, as she counted under her breath the stitches of her tapestry, "three, four, five," to secure the right variation in the shading of its colours.

"But this is a rest from work," she answered. "You men cannot understand how good needlework is for a woman's mind. It gives order to the thoughts, fixes by a stitch the moment that passes what would otherwise pass with it. And how many griefs are calmed, anxieties forgotten, thanks to this wholly physical act of attention, to this repetition of an even movement, in which one finds—of necessity and very quickly—the equilibrium of one's whole being. It does not hinder me from following the conversation around me, from listening to you still better than I should if I were doing nothing. Three, four, five."

Oh, yes, she listened. That was apparent in the animation of her face, in the way in which she would suddenly straighten herself as she sat, needle in air, the thread taut over her raised little finger. Then she would quickly resume her work, sometimes after putting in a thoughtful word, which agreed generally with the opinions of friend Paul.

An affinity of nature, responsibilities and duties similar in character, drew these two young people together, interested each of them in the other's occupations. She knew the names of his two brothers Pierre and Louis, his plans for their future when they should have left school. Pierre wished to be a sailor. "Oh, no, not a sailor," Bonne Maman would say, "it will be much better for him to come to Paris with you." And when he admitted that he was afraid of Paris for them, she laughed at his fears, called him provincial, full of affection for the city in which she had been born, in which she had grown to chaste young womanhood, and that gave her in return those vivacities, those natural refinements, that jesting good-humour which incline one to believe that Paris, with its rain, its fogs, its sky which is no sky, is the veritable fatherland of woman,

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whose nerves it heals gently and whose qualities of intelligence and patience it develops.

Each day Paul de Géry came to appreciate Mlle. Aline better—he was the only person in the house who so called her—and, strange circumstance, it was Félicia who completed the cementing of their intimacy. What relations could there exist between the artist's daughter, moving in the highest spheres, and this little middle-class girl buried in the depths of a suburb? Relations of childhood and of friendship, common recollections, the great court-yard of the Institution Belin, where they had played together for three years. Paris is full of these juxtapositions. A name uttered by chance in the course of conversation brought out suddenly the bewildered question:

"You know her then?"

"Do I know Félicia? Why, our desks were next each other in the first form. We had the same garden. Such a nice girl, and so handsome and clever!"

And, observing the pleasure with which she was listened to, Aline used to recall the times which already formed a past for her, seductive and melancholy like all pasts. She was very much alone in life, the little Félicia. On Thursdays, when the visitors' names were called out in the parlour, there was no one for her; except from time to time a good but rather absurd lady, formerly a dancer, it was said, whom Félicia called the Fairy. In the same way she used to have pet names for all the people she cared for and whom she transformed in her imaginations. In the holidays they used to see each other. Mme. Joyeuse, while she refused to allow Aline to visit the studio of M. Ruys, used to invite Félicia over for whole days, very short days they seemed, minglings of study, music, dual dreams, young intimate conversations. "Oh, when she used to talk to me of her art, with that enthusiasm which she put into everything, how delighted I was to listen to her! How many things I have understood through her, of which I should never have had any idea. Even now when we go to the Louvre with papa, or to the exhibition of the 1st of May, that special feeling I have about a beautiful piece of sculpture, a good picture, carries

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me back immediately to Félicia. In my early girlhood she represented art to me, and it corresponded with her beauty. Her nature was a little vague, but so kind, I always felt she was something superior to myself, that bore me to great heights without frightening me. Suddenly she stopped coming to see me. I wrote to her; no reply. Later on, fame came to her; to me great sorrows, absorbing duties. And of all that friendship, which was very deep, however, since I cannot speak of it without—'three, four, five'—nothing now remains except old memories like dead ashes."

Bending over her work, the brave girl made haste to count her stitches, to imprison her regret in the capricious designs of her tapestry, while de Géry, moved as he heard the testimony of those pure lips against the calumnies of rejected young dandies or of jealous comrades, felt himself raised, restored to the proud dignity of his love. This sensation was so sweet to him that he returned in search of it very often, not only on the evenings of the lessons, but on other evenings, too, and almost forgot to go to see Félicia for the pleasure of hearing Aline talk about her.

One evening, as he was leaving the Joyeuses' home, Paul met the neighbour, M. André, on the landing, who was waiting for him and took his arm feverishly.

"Monsieur de Géry," he said in a trembling voice, with eyes that glittered behind their spectacles, the one feature of his face that was visible in the darkness, "I have an explanation to ask from you. Will you come up to my rooms for a moment?"

There had only been between this young man and himself the banal relations of two persons accustomed to frequent the same house, whom no tie unites, who seem ever separated by a certain antipathy of nature, of manner of life. What explanation could there be called for between them? He followed him with much perplexed curiosity.

The aspect of the little studio, chilly under its top-light, the empty fireplace, the wind blowing as though they were out of doors and making the candle flicker, the solitary light on the scene of the night's labour of a poor and lonely man, reflected on sheets of paper scribbled over and

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scattered about, in short, this atmosphere of habitations wherein the soul of the inhabitants lives on its own aspirations, caused de Géry to understand the visionary air of André Maranne, his long hair thrown back and streaming loose, that somewhat eccentric appearance, very excusable when it is paid for by a life of sufferings and privations, and his sympathy immediately went out to this courageous fellow whose intrepidity of spirit he guessed at a glance. But the other was too deeply moved by emotion to notice the progress of these reflections. As soon as the door was closed upon them, he said, with the accent of a stage hero addressing the perfidious seducer, " M. de Géry, I am not yet a Cassandra."

And seeing the stupefaction of de Géry:

" Yes, yes," he went on, " we understand each other. I have known perfectly well what it is that draws you to M. Joyeuse's house, and the eager welcome with which you are received there has not escaped my notice either. You are rich, you are of noble birth, there can be no hesitation between you and the poor poet who follows a ridiculous trade in order to give himself full time to reach a success which perhaps will never come. But I shall not allow my happiness to be stolen from me. We must fight, monsieur, we must fight," he repeated, excited by the peaceful calm of his rival. " For long I have loved Mlle. Joyeuse. That love is the end, the joy, and the strength of an existence which is very hard, in many respects painful. I have only it in the world, and I would rather die than give it up."

Strangeness of the human soul! Paul did not love the charming Aline. His whole heart belonged to the other. He thought of her simply as a friend, the most adorable of friends. But the idea that Maranne was interested in her, that she no doubt returned this regard, gave him the jealous shiver of an annoyance, and it was with some considerable sharpness that he inquired whether Mlle. Joyeuse was aware of this sentiment of André's and had in any way authorized him thus to proclaim his rights.

" Yes, monsieur, Mlle. Élise knows that I love her, and before your frequent visits——"

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"Élise? It is of Élise you are speaking?"

"And of whom, then, should I be speaking? The two others are too young."

He fully entered into the traditions of the family, this André. For him, Bonne Maman's age of twenty years, her triumphant grace, were obscured by a surname full of respect and the attributes of a Providence which seemed to cling to her.

A very brief explanation having calmed André Maranne's mind, he offered his apologies to de Géry, begged him to sit down in the arm-chair of carved wood which was used by his sitters, and their conversation quickly assumed an intimate and sympathetic character, brought about by the so abrupt avowal at its opening. Paul confessed that he, too, was in love, and that he came so often to M. Joyeuse's only in order to speak of her whom he loved with Bonne Maman, who had known her formerly.

"That is my case, too," said André. "Bonne Maman knows all my secrets; but we have not yet ventured to say anything to the father. My position is too unsatisfactory. Ah, when I shall have got *Revolt* produced!"

Then they talked of that famous drama, *Revolt*, upon which he had been at work for six months, day and night, which had kept him warm all the winter, a very severe winter, but whose rigours the magic of composition had tempered in the little studio, which it transformed. It was there, within that narrow space, that all the heroes of his piece had appeared to his poet's vision like familiar gnomes dropped from the roof or riding moon-beams, and with them the gorgeous tapestries, the glittering chandeliers, the park scenes with their gleaming flights of steps, all the luxurious circumstance expected in stage effects, as well as the glorious tumult of his first night, the applause of which was represented for him by the rain beating on the glass roof and the boards rattling in the door, while the wind, driving below over the murky timber-yard with a noise as of far-off voices, borne near and anew carried off into the distance, resembled the murmurs from the boxes opened on the corridor to let the news of his success cir-

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culate among the gossip and wonderment of the crowd. It was not only fame and money that it was destined to procure him, this thrice-blessed play, but something also more precious still. With what care accordingly did he not turn over the leaves of the manuscript in five thick books, all bound in blue, books like those that the Levantine was accustomed to strew about on the divan where she took her siestas, and that she marked with her managerial pencil.

Paul, having in his turn approached the table in order to examine the masterpiece, had his glance attracted by a richly framed portrait of a woman, which, placed so near to the artist's work, seemed to be there to preside over it. Élise, doubtless? Oh, no, André had not yet the right to bring out from its protecting case the portrait of his little friend. This was a woman of about forty, gentle of aspect, fair, and extremely elegant. As he perceived her, de Géry could not suppress an exclamation.

"You know her?" asked André Maranne.

"Why, yes. Mme. Jenkins, the wife of the Irish doctor. I have had supper at their house this winter."

"She is my mother." And the young man added in a lower tone:

"Mme. Maranne made a second marriage with Dr. Jenkins. You are surprised, are you not, to see me in these poor surroundings, while my relatives are living in the midst of luxury? But, you know, the chances of family life sometimes group together natures that differ very widely. My stepfather and I have never been able to understand each other. He wished to make me a doctor, whereas my only taste was for writing. So at last, in order to avoid the continual discussions which were painful to my mother, I preferred to leave the house and plough my furrow alone, without the help of anybody. A rough business. Funds were wanting. The whole fortune has gone to that—to M. Jenkins. The question was to earn a livelihood, and you are aware what a difficult thing that is for people like ourselves, supposed to be well brought-up. To think that among all the accomplishments gained from what we are

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accustomed to call a complete education, this child's play was the only thing I could find by which I could hope to earn my bread. A few savings, my own purse, slender like that of most young men, served to buy my first outfit and I installed myself here far away, in the remotest region of Paris, in order not to embarrass my relatives. Between ourselves, I don't expect to make a fortune out of photography. The first days especially were very difficult. Nobody came, or if by chance some unfortunate wight did mount, I made a failure of him, got on my plate only an image blurred and vague as a phantom. One day, at the very beginning, a wedding-party came up to me, the bride all in white, the bridegroom with a waistcoat—like that! And all the guests in white gloves, which they insisted on keeping on for the portrait on account of the rarity of such an event with them. No, I thought I should go mad. Those black faces, the great white patches made by the dresses, the gloves, the orange-blossoms, the unlucky bride, looking like a queen of Niam-niam under her wreath merging indistinguishably into her hair. And all of them so full of good-will, of encouragements to the artist. I began them over again at least twenty times, and kept them till five o'clock in the evening. And then they only left me because it was time for dinner. Can you imagine that wedding-day passed at a photographer's?"

While André was recounting to him with this good humour the troubles of his life, Paul recalled the tirade of Félicia that day when Bohemians had been mentioned, and all that she had said to Jenkins of their lofty courage, avid of privations and trials. He thought also of Aline's passion for her beloved Paris, of which he himself was only acquainted, for his part, with the unwholesome eccentricities, while the great city hid in its recesses so many unknown heroisms and noble illusions. This last impression, already experienced within the sheltered circle of the Joyeuse's great lamp, he received perhaps still more vividly in this atmosphere, less warm, less peaceful, wherein art also entered to add its despairing or glorious uncertainty; and it was with a moved heart that he listened to André

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Maranne as he spoke to him of Élise, of the examination which it was taking her so long to pass, of the difficulties of photography, of all that unforeseen element in his life which would end certainly "when he should have secured the production of *Revolt*," a charming smile accompanying on the poet's lips this so often expressed hope, which he was wont himself to hasten to make fun of, as though to deprive others of the right to do so.

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X

MEMOIRS OF AN OFFICE PORTER—SERVANTS

TRULY Fortune in Paris has bewildering turns of the wheel!

To have seen the Territorial Bank as I have seen it, the rooms without fires, never swept, the desert with its dust, protested bills piled high as *that* on the desks, every week a notice of sale posted at the door, my stew spreading throughout the whole place the odour of a poor man's kitchen; and then to witness now the reconstitution of our company in its newly furnished halls, in which I have orders to light fires big enough for a Government department, amid a busy crowd, blowings of whistles, electric bells, gold pieces piled up till they fall over; it savours of miracle. I need to look at myself in the glass before I can believe it, to see in the mirror my iron-gray coat, trimmed with silver, my white tie, my usher's chain like the one I used to wear at the Faculty on the days when there were sittings. And to think that to work this transformation, to bring back to our brows gaiety, the mother of concord, to restore to our scrip its value ten times over, to our dear governor the esteem and confidence of which he had been so unjustly deprived, one man has sufficed, the being of supernatural wealth whom the hundred voices of renown designate by the name of the Nabob.

Oh, the first time that he came to the office, with his fine presence, his face a little worn perhaps, but so distinguished, his manners of one accustomed to frequent courts, upon terms of the utmost familiarity with all the princes of the Orient—in a word, that indescribable quality of assurance and greatness which is bestowed by immense wealth—I felt my heart bursting beneath the double row

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of buttons on my waistcoat. People may mouth in vain their great words of equality and fraternity; there are men who stand so surely above the rest that one would like to bow one's self down flat in their presence, to find new phrases of admiration in order to compel them to take a practical interest in one. Let us hasten to add that I had need of nothing of the kind to attract the attention of the Nabob. As I rose at his passage—moved to some emotion, but with dignity, you may trust Passajon for that—he looked at me with a smile and said in an undertone to the young man who accompanied him: "What a fine head, like a—" Then there came a word which I did not catch very well, a word ending in *art*, something like *leopard*. No, however, it cannot have been that. I don't know that my head at all resembles a leopard's. *Jean-Bart*, perhaps, although even then I hardly see the connection. However that be,. in any case he did say, "What a fine head," and this condescension made me proud. Moreover, all the directors show me a marked degree of kindness and politeness. It seems that there was a discussion with regard to me at the meeting of the board, to determine whether I should be kept or dismissed like our cashier, that ill-tempered fellow who was always talking of getting everybody sent to the galleys, and whom they have now invited to go elsewhere to manufacture his cheap shirt-fronts. Well done! That will teach him to be rude to people. So far as I am concerned, Monsieur the Governor kindly consented to overlook my somewhat hasty words, in consideration of my record of service at the Territorial and elsewhere; and at the conclusion of the board meeting, he said to me with his musical accent: "Passajon, you remain with us." It may be imagined how happy I was and how profuse in the expression of my gratitude. But just think! I should have left with my few pence without hope of ever saving any more; obliged to go and cultivate my vineyard in that little country district of Montbars, a very narrow field for a man who has lived in the midst of all the financial aristocracy of Paris, and among those great banking operations by which fortunes are made

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at a stroke. Instead of that, here I am established afresh in a magnificent situation, my wardrobe renewed, and my savings, which I spent a whole day in fingering over, intrusted to the kind care of the governor, who has undertaken to invest them for me advantageously. I think that is a manœuvre which he is the very man to execute successfully. And no need for the least anxiety. Every fear vanishes before the word which is in vogue just now at all councils of administration, in all shareholders' meetings, on the Bourse, the boulevards, and everywhere: "The Nabob is in the affair." That is to say, gold is being poured out abundantly, the worst *combinazioni* are excellent.

He is so rich, that man!

Rich to a degree one cannot imagine. Has he not just lent fifteen million francs as a simple loan passing from hand to hand, to the Bey of Tunis? I repeat, fifteen millions. It was a trick he played on the Hemerlingues, who wished to embroil him with that monarch and cut the grass under his feet in those fine regions of the Orient where it grows golden, high, and thick. It was an old Turk whom I know, Colonel Brahim, one of our directors at the Territorial, who arranged the affair. Naturally, the Bey, who happened to be, it appears, short of pocket-money, was very much touched by the alacrity of the Nabob to oblige him, and he has just sent him through Brahim a letter of thanks in which he announces that upon the occasion of his next visit to Vichy, he will stay a couple of days with him at that fine Château de Saint-Romans, which the former Bey, the brother of this one, honoured with a visit once before. You may fancy, what an honour! To receive a reigning prince as a guest! The Hemerlingues are in a rage. They who had manœuvred so carefully—the son at Tunis, the father in Paris—to get the Nabob into disfavour. And then it is true that fifteen millions is a big sum. And do not say, "Passajon is telling us some fine tales." The person who acquainted me with the story has held in his hands the paper sent by the Bey in an envelope of green silk stamped with the royal seal. If he did not read it, it was because this paper was written in Arabic,

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otherwise he would have made himself familiar with its contents as in the case of all the rest of the Nabob's correspondence. This person is his *valet de chambre*, M. Noël, to whom I had the honour of being introduced last Friday at a small evening-party of persons in service which he gave to all his friends. I record an account of this function in my memoirs as one of the most curious things which I have seen in the course of my four years of sojourn in Paris.

I had thought at first when M. Francis, Monpavon's *valet de chambre*, spoke to me of the thing, that it was a question of one of those little clandestine junketings such as are held sometimes in the garrets of our boulevards with the fragments of food brought up by Mlle. Séraphine and the other cooks in the building, at which you drink stolen wine, and gorge yourself, sitting on trunks, trembling with fear, by the light of a couple of candles which are extinguished at the least noise in the corridors. These secret practices are repugnant to my character. But when I received, as for the regular servants' ball, an invitation written in a very beautiful hand upon pink paper:

"M. Noël rekwests M—— to be presant at his eveninparty on the 25th instent. Super will be provided"

I saw clearly, notwithstanding the defective spelling, that it was a question of something serious and authorized. I dressed myself therefore in my newest frock-coat, my finest linen, and arrived at the Place Vendôme at the address indicated by the invitation.

For the giving of his party, M. Noël had taken advantage of a first-night at the opera, to which all fashionable society was thronging, thus giving the servants a free rein, and putting the entire place at our disposal until midnight. Notwithstanding this, the host had preferred to receive us upstairs in his own bed-chamber, and this I approved highly, being in that matter of the opinion of the old fellow in the rhyme:

Fie on the pleasure
That fear may corrupt!

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But my word, the luxury on the Place Vendôme! A felt carpet on the floor, the bed hidden away in an alcove, Algerian curtains with red stripes, an ornamental clock in green marble on the chimneypiece, the whole lighted by lamps of which the flames can be regulated at will. Our oldest member, M. Chalmette, is not better lodged at Dijon. I arrived about nine o'clock with Monpavon's old Francis, and I must confess that my entry made a sensation, preceded as I was by my academical past, my reputation for politeness, and great knowledge of the world. My fine presence did the rest, for it must be said that I know how to go into a room. M. Noël, in a dress-coat, very dark skinned and with mutton-chop whiskers, came forward to meet us.

"You are welcome, M. Passajon," said he, and taking my cap with silver galloons which, according to the fashion, I had kept in my right hand while making my entry, he gave it to a gigantic negro in red and gold livery.

"Here, Lakdar, hang that up—and that," he added by way of a joke, giving him a kick in a certain region of the back.

There was much laughter at this sally, and we began to chat together in very friendly fashion. An excellent fellow, this M. Noël, with his accent of the Midi, his pronounced style of dress, the smoothness and the simplicity of his manners. He reminded me of the Nabob, without his distinction, however. I noticed, moreover, that evening, that these resemblances are frequently to be observed in *valets de chambre* who, living in the intimacy of their masters, by whom they are always a little dazzled, end by acquiring their manners and habits. Thus, M. Francis has a certain way of straightening his body when displaying his linen-front, a mania for raising his arms in order to pull his cuffs down—it is Monpavon to a T. Now one, for instance, who bears no resemblance to his master is Joey, the coachman of Dr. Jenkins. I call him Joey, but at the party every one called him Jenkins; for, in that world, the stable folk among themselves give to each other the names of their masters, call each other Bois l'Héry,

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Monpavon, and Jenkins, without ceremony. Is it in order to degrade their superiors, to raise the status of menials? Every country has its customs; it is only a fool who will be surprised by them. To return to Joey Jenkins, how can the doctor, affable as he is, so polished in every particular, keep in his service that brute, bloated with *porter* and *gin*,* who will remain silent for hours at a time, then, at the first mounting of liquor to his head, begins to howl and to wish to fight everybody, as witness the scandalous scene which had just occurred when we entered?

The marquis's little groom, Tom Bois l'Héry, as they call him here, had desired to have a jest with this uncouth creature of an Irishman, who had replied to a bit of Parisian urchin's banter with a terrible Belfast blow of his fist right in the lad's face.

"A sausage with paws, I! A sausage with paws, I!" repeated the coachman, choking with rage, while his innocent victim was being carried into the adjoining room, where the ladies and girls found occupation in bathing his nose. The disturbance was quickly appeased, thanks to our arrival, thanks also to the wise words of M. Barreau, a middle-aged man, sedate and majestic, with a manner resembling my own. He is the Nabob's cook, a former *chef* of the Café Anglais, whom Cardailhac, the manager of the Nouveautés, has procured for his friend. To see him in a dress-coat, with white tie, his handsome face full and clean-shaven, you would have taken him for one of the great functionaries of the Empire. It is true that a cook in an establishment where the table is set every morning for thirty persons, in addition to madame's special meal, and all eating only the very finest and most delicate of food, is not the same as the ordinary preparer of a *ragout*. He is paid the salary of a colonel, lodged, boarded, and then the perquisites! One has hardly a notion of the extent of the perquisites in a berth like this. Every one consequently addressed him respectfully, with the deference due to a man of his importance. "M. Barreau" here, "My

* In English in the original.

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dear M. Barreau" there. For it is a great mistake to imagine that servants among themselves are all cronies and comrades. Nowhere do you find a hierarchy more prevalent than among them. Thus at M. Noël's party I distinctly noticed that the coachmen did not fraternize with their grooms, nor the valets with the footmen and the lackeys, any more than the steward or the butler would mix with the lower servants; and when M. Barreau emitted any little pleasantry it was amusing to see how exceedingly those under his orders seemed to enjoy it. I am not opposed to this kind of thing. Quite on the contrary. As our oldest member used to say, "A society without a hierarchy is like a house without a staircase." The observation, however, seems to me one worth setting down in these memoirs.

The party, I need scarcely say, did not shine with its full splendour until after the return of its most beauteous ornaments, the ladies and girls who had gone to nurse the little Tom, ladies'-maids with shining and pomaded hair, chiefs of domestic departments in bonnets adorned with ribbons, negresses, housekeepers, a brilliant assembly in which I was immediately given great prestige, thanks to my dignified bearing and to the surname of "Uncle" which the younger among these delightful persons saw fit to bestow upon me.

I fancy there was in the room a good deal of second-hand frippery in the way of silk and lace, rather faded velvet, even, eight-button gloves that had been cleaned several times, and perfumes abstracted from madame's dressing-table, but the faces were happy, thoughts given wholly to gaiety, and I was able to make a little corner for myself, which was very lively, always within the bounds of propriety—that goes without saying—and of a character suitable for an individual in my position. This was, moreover, the general tone of the party. Until towards the end of the entertainment I heard none of those unseemly jests, none of those scandalous stories which give so much amusement to the gentlemen of our Board; and I take pleasure in remarking that Bois l'Héry the coachman—

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to cite only that one example—is much more observant of the proprieties than Bois l'Héry the master.

M. Noël alone was conspicuous by his familiar tone and by the liveliness of his repartees. In him you have a man who does not hesitate to call things by their names. Thus he remarked aloud to M. Francis, from one end of the room to the other: "I say, Francis, that old swindler of yours has made a nicé thing out of us again this week." And as the other drew himself up with a dignified air, M. Noël began to laugh.

"No offence, old chap. The coffer is solid. You will never get to the bottom of it."

And it was on this that he told us of the loan of fifteen millions, to which I alluded above.

I was surprised, however, to see no sign of preparation for the supper which was mentioned on the cards of invitation, and I expressed my anxiety on the point to one of my charming nieces, who replied:

"They are waiting for M. Louis."

"M. Louis?"

"What! you do not know M. Louis, the *valet de chambre* of the Duc de Mora?"

I then learned who this influential personage was, whose protection is sought by prefects, senators, even ministers, and who must make them pay stiffly for it, since with his salary of twelve hundred francs from the duke he has saved enough to produce him an income of twenty-five thousand, sends his daughters to the convent school of the Sacré Cœur, his son to the Collége Bourdaloue, and owns a chalet in Switzerland where all his family goes to stay during the holidays.

At this juncture the personage in question arrived; but nothing in his appearance would have suggested the unique position in Paris which is his. Nothing of majesty in his deportment, a waistcoat buttoned up to the collar, a mean-looking and insolent manner, and a way of speaking without moving the lips which is very impolite to those who are listening to you.

He greeted the assembly with a slight nod of the head,

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extended a finger to M. Noël, and we were sitting there looking at each other, frozen by his grand manners, when a door opened at the farther end of the room and we beheld the supper laid out with all kinds of cold meats, pyramids of fruit, and bottles of all shapes beneath the light falling from two candelabra.

"Come, gentlemen, give the ladies your hands." In a minute we were at table, the ladies seated next the eldest or the most important among us all, the rest on their feet, serving, chattering, drinking from everybody's glass, picking a morsel from any plate. I had M. Francis for my neighbour and I had to listen to his grudges against M. Louis, of whose place he was envious, so brilliant was it in comparison with that which he occupied under the noble but worn-out old gambler who was his master.

"He is a *parvenu*," he muttered to me in a low voice. "He owes his fortune to his wife, to Mme. Paul."

It appears that this Mme. Paul is a housekeeper, who has been in the duke's establishment for twenty years, and who excels beyond all others in the preparation for him of a certain ointment for an affection to which he is subject. She is indispensable to Mora. Recognising this, M. Louis made love to the old lady, married her though much younger than she, and in order not to lose his sick-nurse and her ointments, his excellency engaged the husband as *valet de chambre*. At bottom, in spite of what I said to M. Francis, for my own part I thought the proceeding quite praiseworthy and conformable to the loftiest morality, since the mayor and the priest had a finger in it. Moreover, that excellent meal, composed of delicate and very expensive foods with which I was unacquainted even by name, had strongly disposed my mind to indulgence and good-humour. But every one was not similarly inclined, for from the other side of the table I could hear the bass voice of M. Barreau, complaining:

"Why can he not mind his own business? Do I go pushing my nose into his department? To begin with, the thing concerns Bompain, not him. And then, after all, what is it that I am charged with? The butcher sends me

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five baskets of meat every morning. I use only two of them and sell the three others back to him. Where is the *chef* who does not do the same? As if, instead of coming to play the spy in my basement, he would not do better to look after the great leakage up there. When I think that in three months that gang on the first floor has smoked twenty-eight thousand francs' worth of cigars. Twenty-eight thousand francs! Ask Noël if I am not speaking the truth. And on the second floor, in the apartments of madame, that is where you should look to see a fine confusion of linen, of dresses thrown aside after being worn once, jewels by the handful, pearls that you crush on the floor as you walk. Oh, but wait a little. I shall get my own back from that same little gentleman."

I understood that the allusion was to M. de Géry, that young secretary of the Nabob who often comes to the Territorial, where he is always occupied rummaging into the books. Very polite, certainly, but a very haughty young man, who does not know how to push himself forward. From all round the table there came nothing but a concert of maledictions on him. M. Louis himself addressed some remarks to the company upon the subject with his grand air:

"In our establishment, my dear M. Barreau, the cook quite recently had an affair, similar to yours, with the chief of his excellency's Cabinet, who had permitted himself to make some comments upon the expenditure. The cook went up to the duke's apartments upon the instant in his professional costume, and with his hand on the strings of his apron, said, 'Let your excellency choose between monsieur and myself.' The duke did not hesitate. One can find as many Cabinet leaders as one desires, while the good cooks, you can count them. There are in Paris four altogether. I include you, my dear Barreau. We dismissed the chief of our Cabinet, giving him a prefecture of the first class by way of consolation; but we kept the *chef* of our kitchen."

"Ah, you see," said M. Barreau, who rejoiced to hear this story, "you see what it is to serve in the house of a

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grand seigneur. But *parvenus* are *parvenus*—what will you have?"

"And that is all Jansoulet is," added M. Francis, tugging at his cuffs. "A man who used to be a street porter at Marseilles."

M. Noël took offence at this.

"Hey, down there, old Francis, you are very glad all the same to have him to pay your card-debts, the street porter of La Cannebrière. You may well be embarrassed by *parvenus* like us who lend millions to kings, and whom *grands seigneurs* like Mora do not blush to admit to their tables."

"Oh, in the country," chuckled M. Francis, with a sneer that showed his old tooth.

The other rose, quite red in the face. He was about to give way to his anger when M. Louis made a gesture with his hand to signify that he had something to say, and M. Noël sat down immediately, putting his hand to his ear like all the rest of us in order to lose nothing that fell from those august lips.

"It is true," remarked the personage, speaking with the slightest possible movement of his mouth and continuing to take his wine in little sips, "it is true that we received the Nabob at Grandbois the other week. There even happened something very funny on the occasion. We have a quantity of mushrooms in the second park, and his excellency amuses himself sometimes by gathering them. Now at dinner was served a large dish of fungi. There were present, what's his name—I forget, what is it?—Marigny, the Minister of the Interior, Monpavon, and your master, my dear Noël. The mushrooms went the round of the table, they looked nice, the gentlemen helped themselves freely, except M. le Duc, who cannot digest them and out of politeness feels it his duty to remark to his guests: 'Oh, you know, it is not that I am suspicious of them. They are perfectly safe. It was I myself who gathered them.'

"'*Sapristi!*' said Monpavon, laughing, 'then, my dear Auguste, allow me to be excused from tasting them.' Ma-

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rigny, less familiar, glanced at his plate out of the corner of his eye.

"'But, yes, Monpavon, I assure you. They look extremely good, these mushrooms. I am truly sorry that I have no appetite left.'

"The duke remained very serious.

"'Come, M. Jansoulet, I sincerely hope that you are not going to offer me this affront, you also. Mushrooms selected by myself.'

"'Oh, Excellency, the very idea of such a thing! Why, I would eat them with my eyes closed.'

"So you see what sort of luck he had, the poor Nabob, the first time that he dined with us. Duperron, who was serving opposite him, told us all about it in the pantry. It seems there could have been nothing more comic than to see the Jansoulet stuffing himself with mushrooms, and rolling terrified eyes, while the others sat watching him curiously without touching their plates. He sweated under the effort, poor wretch. And the best of it was that he took a second portion, he actually found the courage to take a second portion. He kept drinking off glasses of wine, however, like a mason, between each mouthful. Ah, well, do you wish to hear my opinion? What he did there was very clever, and I am no longer surprised that this fat cow-herd should have become the favourite of sovereigns. He knows where to flatter them in those little pretensions which no man avows. In brief, the duke has been crazy over him since that day."

This little story caused much laughter and scattered the clouds which had been raised by a few imprudent words. So then, since the wine had untied people's tongues, and they knew each other better, elbows were leaned on the table and the conversation fell on masters, on the places in which each had served, on the amusing things he had seen in them. Ah! of how many such adventures did I not hear, how much of the interior life of those establishments did I not see pass before me. Naturally I also made my own little effect with the story of my larder at the Territorial, the times when I used to keep my stew in the

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empty safe, which circumstance, however, did not prevent our old cashier, a great stickler for forms, from changing the key-word of the lock every two days, as though all the treasures of the Bank of France had been inside. M. Louis appeared to find my anecdote entertaining. But the most astonishing was what the little Bois l'Héry, with his Parisian street-boy's accent, related to us concerning the household of his employers.

Marquis and Marquise de Bois l'Héry, second floor, Boulevard Haussmann. Furniture rich as at the Tuileries, blue satin on all the walls, Chinese ornaments, pictures, curiosities, a veritable museum, indeed, overflowing even on to the stairway. The service very smart: six men-servants, chestnut livery in winter, nankeen livery in summer. These people are seen everywhere at the small Mondays, at the races, at first-nights, at embassy balls, and their name always in the newspapers with a remark upon the handsome toilettes of Madame, and Monsieur's remarkable chic. Well! all that is nothing at all but pretence, plated goods, show, and when the marquis wants five francs nobody would lend them to him upon his possessions. The furniture is hired by the fortnight from Fitily, the upholsterer of the demi-monde. The curiosities, the pictures, belong to old Schwalbach, who sends his clients round there and makes them pay doubly dear, since people don't bargain when they think they are dealing with a marquis, an amateur. As for the toilettes of the marquise, the milliner and the dressmaker provide her with them each season gratis, get her to wear the new fashions, a little ridiculous sometimes but which society subsequently adopts because Madame is still a very handsome woman and reputed for her elegance; she is what is called a *launcher*. Finally, the servants! Makeshifts like the rest, changed each week at the pleasure of the registry office which sends them there to do a period of probation by way of preliminary to a serious engagement. If you have neither sureties nor certificates, if you have just come out of prison or anything of that kind, Glanand, the famous agent of the Rue de la Paix, sends you off to the Boulevard Haussmann. You re-

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main in service there for a week or two, just the time necessary to buy a good reference from the marquis, who, of course, it is understood, pays you nothing and barely boards you; for in that house the kitchen-ranges are cold most of the time, Monsieur and Madame dining out nearly every evening or going to balls, where a supper is included in the entertainment. It is positive fact that there are people in Paris who take the sideboard seriously and make the first meal of their day after midnight. The Bois l'Hérys, in consequence, are well-informed with regard to the houses that provide refreshments. They will tell you that you get a very good supper at the Austrian Embassy, that the Spanish Embassy rather neglects the wines, and that it is at the Foreign Office again that you find the best *chaud-froid de volailles*. And that is the life of this curious household. Nothing that they possess is really theirs; everything is tacked on, loosely fastened with pins. A gust of wind and the whole thing blows away. But at least they are certain of losing nothing. It is this assurance which gives to the marquis that air of raillery worthy of a Father Tranquille which he has when he looks at you with both hands in his pockets, as much as to say: "Ah, well, and what then? What can they do to me?"

And the little groom, in the attitude which I have just mentioned, with his head like that of a prematurely old and vicious child, imitated his master so well that I could fancy I saw himself as he looks at our board meetings, standing in front of the governor and overwhelming him with his cynical pleasantries. All the same, one must admit that Paris is a tremendously great city, for a man to be able to live thus, through fifteen, twenty years of tricks, artifice, dust thrown in people's eyes, without everybody finding him out, and for him still to be able to make a triumphal entry into a drawing-room in the rear of his name announced loudly and repeatedly, "Monsieur le Marquis de Bois l'Héry."

No, look you, the things that are to be learned at a servants' party, what a curious spectacle is presented by the fashionable world of Paris, seen thus from below, from

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the basements, you need to go to one before you can realize. Here, for instance, is a little fragment of conversation which, happening to find myself between M. Francis and M. Louis, I overheard about the worthy sire de Monpavon.

"You are making a mistake, Francis. You are in funds just now. You ought to take advantage of the occasion to restore that money to the Treasury."

"What will you have?" replied M. Francis with a despondent air. "Play is devouring us."

"Yes, I know it well. But take care. We shall not always be there. We may die, fall from power. Then you will be asked for accounts by the people down yonder. And it will be a terrible business."

I had often heard whispered the story of a forced loan of two hundred thousand francs which the marquis was reputed to have secured from the State at the time when he was Receiver-General; but the testimony of his *valet de chambre* was worse than all. Ah! if masters had any suspicion of how much servants know, of all the stories that are told in the servants' hall, if they could see their names dragged among the sweepings of the house and the refuse of the kitchen, they would never again dare to say even "shut the door" or "harness the horses." Why, for instance, take Dr. Jenkins, with the most valuable practice in Paris, ten years of life in common with a magnificent woman, who is sought after everywhere; it is in vain that he has done everything to dissimulate his position, announced his marriage in the newspapers after the English fashion, admitted to his house only foreign servants knowing hardly three words of French. In those three words, seasoned with vulgar oaths and blows of his fist on the table, his coachman Joey, who hates him, told us his whole history during supper.

"She is going to kick the bucket, his Irish wife, the real one. Remains to be seen now whether he will marry the other. Forty-five, she is, Mrs. Maranne, and not a shilling. You should see how afraid she is of being left in the lurch. Whether he marries her or whether he does not marry her—kss, kss—we shall have a good laugh."

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And the more drink he was given, the more he told us about her, speaking of his unfortunate mistress as though she were the lowest of the low. For my own part, I confess that she interested me, this false Mme. Jenkins, who goes about weeping in every corner, implores her lover as though he were the executioner, and runs the chance of being thrown overboard altogether, when all society believes her to be married, respectable, and established in life. The others only laughed over the story, the women especially. Dame! it is amusing when one is in service to see that the ladies of the upper ten have their troubles also and torments that keep them awake at night.

Our festal board at this stage presented the most lively aspect, a circle of gay faces stretched towards this Irishman whose story was adjudged to have won the prize. The fact excited envy; the rest sought and hunted through their memories for whatever they might hold in the way of old scandals, adventures of deceived husbands, of those intimate privacies which are emptied on the kitchen-table along with the scraps from the plates and the dregs from the bottles. The champagne was beginning to claim its own among the guests. Joey wanted to dance a jig on the table-cloth. The ladies, at the least word that was a little gay, threw themselves back with the piercing laughter of people who are being tickled, allowing their embroidered skirts to trail beneath the table, loaded with the remains of the food and covered with spilt grease. M. Louis had discreetly retired. Glasses were filled up before they had been emptied; one of the housekeepers dipped a handkerchief in hers, filled with water, and bathed her forehead with it, because her head was swimming, she said. It was time that the festivity should end; and, in fact, an electric bell ringing in the corridor warned us that the footman, on duty at the theatre, had come to summon the coachmen. Thereupon Monpavon proposed the health of the master of the house, thanking him for his little party. M. Noël announced that he proposed to give another at Saint-Romans, in honour of the visit of the Bey, to which most of those present would probably be invited. And I was about

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to rise in my turn, being sufficiently accustomed to social banquets to know that on such an occasion the oldest man present is expected to propose the health of the ladies, when the door opened abruptly, and a tall footman, bespattered with mud, a dripping umbrella in his hand, perspiring, out of breath, cried to us, without respect for the company:

"But come on then, you set of idiots! What are you sticking here for? Don't you know it is over?"

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XI

THE FESTIVITIES IN HONOUR OF THE BEY

In the regions of the Midi, of bygone civilization, historical castles still standing are rare. Only at long intervals on the hillsides some old abbey lifts its tottering and dismembered front, perforated by holes that once were windows, whose empty spaces look now only to the sky. A monument of dust, burnt up by the sun, dating from the time of the Crusades or of the Courts of Love, without a trace of man among its stones, where even the ivy no longer clings nor the acanthus, but which the dried lavenders and the ferns embalm. In the midst of all those ruins the castle of Saint-Romans is an illustrious exception. If you have travelled in the Midi you have seen it, and you are to see it again now. It is between Valence and Montélimart, on a site just where the railway runs alongside the Rhone, at the foot of the rich slopes of Baume, Raucoule, and Mercurol, where the far-famed vineyards of l'Ermitage, spreading out for five miles in close-planted rows of vines, which seem to grow as one looks, roll down almost into the river, which is there as green and full of islands as the Rhine at Basle, but under a sun the Rhine has never known. Saint-Romans is opposite on the other side of the river; and, in spite of the brevity of the vision, the headlong rush of the train, which seems trying to throw itself madly into the Rhone at each turning, the castle is so large, so well situated on the neighbouring hill, that it seems to follow the crazy race of the train, and stamps on your mind forever the memory of its terraces, its balustrades, its Italian architecture; two low stories surmounted by a colonnaded gallery and flanked by two slate-roofed pavilions dominating the great slopes where the water of the cascades rebounds, the

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network of gravel walks, the perspective of long hedges, terminated by some white statue which stands out against the blue sky as on the luminous ground of a stained-glass window. Quite at the top, in the middle of the vast lawns whose green turf shines ironically under the scorching sun, a gigantic cedar uplifts its crested foliage, enveloped in black and floating shadows—an exotic silhouette, upright before this former dwelling of some Louis XIV farmer of revenue, which makes one think of a great negro carrying the sunshade of a gentleman of the court.

From Valence to Marseilles, throughout all the Valley of the Rhone, Saint-Romans of Bellaignes is famous as an enchanted palace; and, indeed, in that country burnt up by the fiery wind, this oasis of greenness and beautiful rushing water is a true fairy-land.

"When I am rich, mamma," Jansoulet used to say, as quite a small boy, to his mother whom he adored, "I shall give you Saint-Romans of Bellaignes." And as the life of the man seemed the fulfilment of a story from the Arabian Nights, as all his wishes came true, even the most disproportionate, as his maddest chimeras came to lie down before him, to lick his hands like familiar and obedient spaniels, he had bought Saint-Romans to offer it, newly furnished and grandiosely restored, to his mother. Although it was ten years since then, the dear old woman was not yet used to her splendid establishment. "It is the palace of Queen Jeanne that you have given me, my dear Bernard," she wrote to her son. "I shall never live there." She never did live there, as a matter of fact, having stayed at the steward's house, an isolated building of modern construction, situated quite at the other end of the grounds, so as to overlook the outbuildings and the farm, the sheepfolds and the oil-mills, with their rural horizon of stacks, olive-trees and vines, extending over the plain as far as one could see. In the great castle she would have imagined herself a prisoner in one of those enchanted dwellings where sleep seizes you in the midst of your happiness and does not let you go for a hundred years. Here, at least, the peasant-woman—who had never been able to accustom

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herself to this colossal fortune, come too late, from too far, and like a thunder-clap—felt herself linked to reality by the coming and going of the work-people, the letting-out and taking-in of the cattle, their slow movement to the drinking pond, all that pastoral life which woke her by the familiar call of the cocks and the sharp cries of the peacocks, and brought her down the corkscrew staircase of the pavilion before dawn. She looked upon herself only as the trustee of this magnificent estate, which she was taking care of for her son, and wished to give back to him in perfect condition on the day when, rich enough and tired of living with the Turks, he would come, according to his promise, to live with her beneath the shade of Saint-Romans.

Then, too, what universal and indefatigable supervision! Through the mists of early morning the farm-servants heard her rough and husky voice: "Olivier, Peyrol, Audibert. Come on! It is four o'clock." Then she would hasten to the immense kitchen, where the maids, heavy with sleep, were heating the porridge over the crackling, new-lit fire. They gave her a little dish of red Marseilles-ware full of boiled chestnuts—frugal breakfast of bygone times, which nothing would have induced her to change. At once she was off, hurrying with great strides, her large silver key-ring at her belt, whence jingled all her keys, her plate in her hand, balanced by the distaff which she held, in working order, under her arm, for she spun all day long, and did not stop even to eat her chestnuts. On the way, a glance at the stables, still dark, where the animals were moving dully, at the stifling pens with their rows of impatient and outstretched muzzles; and the first glimmers of light creeping over the layers of stones that supported the embankment of the park, lit up the figure of the old woman, running in the dew, with the lightness of a girl, despite her seventy years—verifying exactly each morning all the wealth of the domain, anxious to make sure that the night had not taken away the statues and the vases, uprooted the hundred-year-old quincunx, dried up the springs which filtered into their resounding basins. Then the full sunlight of midday, hum-

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ming and vibrating, showed still, on the sand of an alley, against the white wall of a terrace, the long figure of the old woman, elegant and straight as her spindle, picking up bits of dead wood, breaking off some uneven branch of a shrub, careless of the shock it caused her and the sweat which broke out over her skin. Towards this hour another figure was to be seen in the park also—less active, less noisy, dragging rather than walking, leaning against the walls and railings—a poor round-shouldered being, shaky and stiff, a figure from which life seemed to have gone out, never speaking, when he was tired giving a little plaintive cry towards the servant, who was always near, who helped him to sit down, to crouch upon some step, where he would stay for hours, motionless, mute, his mouth hanging, his eyes blinking, hushed by the strident monotony of the grasshopper's cry—a blotch of humanity in the splendid horizon.

This, this was the first-born, Bernard's brother, the darling child of his father and mother, the glorious hope of the nail-maker's family. Slaves, like so many others in the Midi, to the superstition of the rights of primogeniture, they had made every possible sacrifice to send to Paris their fine, ambitious lad, who set out assured of success, the admiration of all the young women of the town; and Paris, after having for six years beaten, twisted, and squeezed in its great vat the brilliant southern stripling, after having burnt him with all its vitriol, rolled him in all its mud, finished by sending him back in this state of wreckage, stupefied and paralyzed—killing his father with sorrow, and forcing his mother to sell her all, and live as a sort of char-woman in the better-class houses of her own countryside. Lucky it was that just then, when this broken piece of humanity, discharged from all the hospitals of Paris, was sent back by public charity to Bourg-Saint-Andéol, Bernard —he whom they called Cadet, as in these southern families, half Arab as they are, the eldest always takes the family name, and the last-comer that of Cadet—Bernard was at Tunis making his fortune, and sending home money regularly. But what pain it was for the poor mother to owe everything, even the life, the comfort of the sad invalid, to

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the robust and courageous boy whom his father and she had loved without any tenderness; who, since he was five years old, they had treated as a "hand," because he was very strong, woolly-headed, and ugly, and even then knew better than any one in the house how to deal in old nails. Ah! how she longed to have him near her, her Cadet, to make some return to him for all the good he did, to pay at last the debt of love and motherly tenderness that she owed him!

But, you see, these princely fortunes have the burdens, the wearinesses of royal lives. This poor mother, in her dazzling surroundings, was very like a real queen: familiar with long exiles, cruel separations, and the trials which detract from greatness; one of her sons forever stupefied, the other far away, seldom writing, absorbed in his business, saying, "I will come," and never coming. She had only seen him once in twelve years, and then in the whirl of a visit of the Bey to Saint-Romans—a rush of horses and carriages, of fireworks, and of banquets. He had gone in the suite of his monarch, having scarcely time to say good-bye to his old mother, to whom there remained of this great joy only a few pictures in the illustrated papers, showing Bernard Jansoulet arriving at the castle with Ahmed, and presenting his mother. Is it not thus that kings and queens have their family feelings exploited in the journals? There was also a cedar of Lebanon, brought from the other end of the world, a regular mountain of a tree, whose transport had been as difficult and as costly as that of Cleopatra's needle, and whose erection as a souvenir of the royal visit by dint of men, money, and teams had shaken the very foundations. But this time, at least, knowing him to be in France for several months—perhaps for good—she hoped to have her Bernard to herself. And now he returned to her, one fir evening, enveloped in the same triumphant glory, in the same official display, surrounded by a crowd of counts, of marquises, of fine gentlemen from Paris, filling, they and their servants, the two large wagonettes she had sent to meet them at the little station of Giffas on the other side of the Rhone.

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"Come, give me a kiss, my dear mother. There is nothing to be ashamed of in giving a good hug to the boy you haven't seen all these years. Besides, all these gentlemen are our friends. This is the Marquis de Monpavon, the Marquis de Bois l'Héry. Ah! the time is past when I brought you to eat vegetable soup with us, little Cabassu and Jean-Baptiste Bompain. You know M. de Géry? With my old friend Cardailhac, whom I now present, that makes the first batch. There are others to come. Prepare yourself for a fine upsetting. We entertain the Bey in four days."

"The Bey again!" said the old woman, astounded. "I thought he was dead."

Jansoulet and his guests could not help laughing at this comical terror, accentuated by her southern intonation.

"It is another, mamma. There is always a Bey—thank goodness. But don't be afraid. You won't have so much bother this time. Our friend Cardailhac has undertaken everything. We are going to have magnificent celebrations. In the meantime, quick—dinner and our rooms. Our Parisians are worn out."

"Everything is ready, my son," said the old lady quietly, stiff and straight under her Cambrai cap, the head-dress with its yellowing flaps, which she never left off even for great occasions. Good fortune had not changed her. She was a true peasant of the Rhone valley, independent and proud, without any of the sly humilities of Balzac's country folk, too artless to be purse-proud. One pride alone she had—that of showing her son with what scrupulous care she had discharged her duties as guardian. Not an atom of dust, not a trace of damp on the walls. All the splendid ground-floor, the reception-rooms with their hangings of iridescent silk new out of the dust sheets, the long summer galleries cool and sonorous, paved with mosaics and furnished with a flowery lightness in the old-fashioned style, with Louis XIV sofas in cane and silk, the immense dining-room decorated with palms and flowers, the billiard-room with its rows of brilliant ivory balls, its crystal chandeliers and its suits of armour—all the length of the castle,

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through its tall windows, wide open to the stately terrace, lay displayed for the admiration of the visitors. The marvellous beauty of the horizon and the setting sun, its own serene and peaceful richness, were reflected in the panes of glass and in the waxed and polished wood with the same clearness as in the mirror-like ornamental lakes, the pictures of the poplars and the swans. The setting was so lovely, the whole effect so grand, that the clamorous and tasteless luxury melted away, disappeared, even to the most hypercritical eyes.

"There is something to work on," said Cardailhac, the manager, his glass in his eye, his hat on one side, combining already his stage-effect. And the haughty air of Monpavon, whom the head-dress of the old woman receiving them on the terrace had shocked, gave way to a condescending smile. Here was something to work on, certainly, and, guided by persons of taste, their friend Jansoulet could really give his Moorish Highness an exceedingly suitable reception. All the evening they talked of nothing else. In the sumptuous dining-room, their elbows on the table, full of meat and drink, they planned and discussed. Cardailhac, who had great ideas, had already his plan complete.

"First of all, you give me *carte-blanche*, don't you, Nabob? *Carte-blanche*, old fellow, and make that fat Hemerlingue burst with envy."

Then the manager explained his scheme. The festivities were to be divided into days, as at Vaux, when Fouquet entertained Louis XIV. One day a play; another day Provençal games, dances, bull-fights, local bands; the third day— And already the manager's hand sketched programmes, announcements; while Bois l'Héry slept, his hands in his pockets, his chair tilted back, his cigar sunk in the corner of his sneering mouth; and the Marquis de Monpavon, always on his best behaviour, straightened his shirt-front to keep himself awake.

De Géry had left them early. He had sought refuge beside the old mother—who had known him as a boy, him and his brothers—in the humble parlour of the brightly dec-

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orated, white-curtained house, where the Nabob's mother tried to perpetuate her humble past with the help of a few relics saved from its wreck.

Paul chatted quietly with the fine old woman, admiring her severe and regular features, her white hair massed together like the hemp of her distaff, as she sat holding herself straight in her seat—never in her life having leaned back or sat in an arm-chair—a little green shawl folded tightly across her flat breast. He called her Françoise, and she called him M. Paul. They were old friends. And guess what they talked about? Of her grandchildren, of Bernard's three sons, whom she did not know and so much longed to know.

"Ah, M. Paul, if you knew how I long to see them! I should have been so happy if he had brought them, my three little ones, instead of these fine gentlemen. Think, I have never seen them, only their portraits which are over there. I am a little afraid of the mother, she is quite a great lady, a Miss Afchin. But them, the children, I am sure they are not proud, and they would love their old granny. It would be like having their father a little boy again, and I would give to them what I did not give to him. You see, M. Paul, parents are not always just. They have their favourites. But God is just, he is. The ones that are most petted and spoiled at the expense of the others, you should see what he does to them for you! And the favour of the old often brings misfortune to the young!"

She sighed, looking towards the large recess from behind the curtains of which there came, at intervals, a long sobbing breath like the sleeping wail of a beaten child who has cried bitterly.

A heavy step on the staircase, a loud, sweet voice saying, very softly, "It is I; don't move," and Jansoulet appeared. He knew his mother's habits, how her lamp was the last to go out, so when every one in the castle was in bed, he came to see her, to chat with her for a little, to rejoice her heart with an affection he could not show before the others. "Oh, stay, my dear Paul; we don't mind you," and once more a child in his mother's presence, with

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loving gestures and words that were really touching, the huge man threw himself on the ground at her feet. She was very happy to have him there, so dearly near, but she was just a little shy. She looked upon him as an all-powerful being, extraordinary, raising him, in her simplicity, to the greatness of an Olympian commanding the thunder and lightning. She spoke to him, asking about his friends, his business, but not daring to put the question she had asked de Géry: "Why haven't my grandchildren come?" But he spoke of them himself. "They are at school, mother. Whenever the holidays begin they shall be sent with Bompain. You remember Jean-Baptiste Bompain? And you shall keep them for two long months. They will come to you and make you tell them stories, and they will go to sleep with their heads on your lap—there, like that."

And he himself, putting his heavy, woolly head on her knee, remembered the happy evenings of his childhood when he would go to sleep so, if she would let him, and his brother had not taken up all the room. He tasted for the first time since his return to France a few minutes of delicious peace away from his restless and artificial life, as he lay pressed to his old mother's heart, in the deep silence of night and of the country which one feels hovering over him in limitless space; the only sounds the beating of that old faithful heart and the swing of the pendulum of the ancient clock in the corner. Suddenly came the same long sigh, as of a child fallen asleep sobbing. Jansoulet lifted his head and looked at his mother, and softly asked: "Is it—?" "Yes," she said, "I make him sleep there. He might need me in the night."

"I would like to see him, to embrace him."

"Come, then." She rose very gravely, took the lamp and went to the alcove, of which she softly drew the large curtain, making a sign to her son to draw near quietly.

He was sleeping. And no doubt something lived in him while he slept that was not there when he waked, for instead of the flaccid immobility in which he was congealed all day, he was now shaken by sudden starts, and on the inexpressive and death-like face there were lines of pain

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and the contractions of suffering life. Jansoulet, much affected, looked long at those wasted features, faded and sickly, where the beard grew with a surprising vigour. Then he bent down, put his lips to the damp brow, and feeling him move, said very gravely and respectfully, as one speaks to the head of the family, "Good-night, my brother." Perhaps the captive soul had heard it from the depths of its dark and abject limbo. For the lips moved and a long moan answered him, a far-away wail, a despairing cry, which filled with helpless tears the glance exchanged between Françoise and her son, and tore from them both the same cry in which their sorrow met, "Pécairé," the local word which expressed all pity and all tenderness.

The next day, from early morning, the commotion began with the arrival of the actors, an avalanche of hats and wigs and big boots, of short skirts and affected cries, of floating veils and fresh make-ups. The women were in a great majority, as Cardailhac thought that for a Bey the play was of little consequence, and that all that was needful was to have catchy tunes in pretty mouths, to show fine arms and shapely legs in the easy costume of light opera. All the well-made celebrities of his theatre were there, Amy Férat at the head of them, a bold young woman who had already had her teeth in the gold of several crowns. There were two or three well-known men whose pale faces made the same kind of chalky and spectral spots amid the green of the trees as the plaster of the statues. All these people, enlivened by the journey, the surprise of the country, the overflowing hospitality, as well as the hope of making something out of this sojourn of Beys and Nabobs and other gilded fools, wanted only to play, to jest and sing with the vulgar boisterousness of a crew of freshly discharged Seine boatmen. But Cardailhac meant otherwise. No sooner were they unpacked, freshened up, and luncheon over than, quick, the parts, the rehearsals! There was no time to lose. They worked in the small drawing-room next the summer gallery, where the theatre was already being fitted up; and the noise of hammers, the songs

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from the burlesque, the shrill voices, the conductor's fiddle, mingled with the loud trumpet-like calls of the peacocks, and rose upon the hot southern wind, which, not recognising it as only the mad rattle of its own grasshoppers, shook it all disdainfully on the trailing tip of its wings.

Seated in the centre of the terrace, as in the stage-box of his theatre, Cardailhac watched the rehearsals, gave orders to a crowd of workmen and gardeners, had trees cut down as spoiling the view, designed the triumphal arches, sent off telegrams, express messengers to mayors, to sub-prefects, to Arles—to arrange for a deputation of girls in national costume; to Barbantane, where the best dancers are; to Faraman, famous for its wild bulls and Camargue horses. And as the name of Jansoulet, joined to that of the Bey of Tunis, flared at the end of all these messages, on all sides they hastened to obey; the telegraph wires were never still, messengers wore out horses on the roads. And this little Sardanapalus of the stage called Cardailhac repeated ever, "There's something to work on here," happy to scatter gold at random like handfuls of seed, to have a stage of forty leagues to stir about—the whole of Provence, of which this rabid Parisian was a native and whose picturesque resources he knew to the core.

Dispossessed of her office, the old mother never appeared. She occupied herself with the farm, and her invalid. She was terrified by this crowd of visitors, these insolent servants whom it was difficult to know from the masters, these women with their impudent and elegant airs, these clean-shaven men who looked like bad priests—all these mad-caps who chased each other at night in the corridors with pillows, with wet sponges, with curtain tassels they had torn down, for weapons. Even after dinner she no longer had her son; he was obliged to stay with his guests, whose number grew each day as the *fêtes* approached; not even the resource of talking to M. Paul about her grandchildren was left, for Jansoulet, a little embarrassed by the seriousness of his friend, had sent him to spend a few days with his brothers. And the careful housekeeper, to whom they came every minute asking the keys

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for linen, for a room, for extra silver, thought of her piles of beautiful dishes, of the sacking of her cupboards and larders, remembered the state in which the old Bey's visit had left the castle, devastated as by a cyclone, and said in her *patois* as she feverishly wet the linen on her distaff: "May lightning strike them, this Bey and all the Beys!"

At last the day came, the great day which is still spoken of in all the country-side. Towards three o'clock in the afternoon, after a sumptuous luncheon at which the old mother presided, this time in a new cap, over a company composed of Parisian celebrities, prefects, deputies, all in full uniform, mayors with their sashes, priests newshaven, Jansoulet in full dress stepped out on to the terrace surrounded by his guests. He saw before him in that splendid frame of magnificent natural scenery, in the midst of flags and arches and coats of arms, a vast swarm of people, a flare of brilliant costumes in rows on the slopes, at corners of the walks; here, grouped in beds, like flowers on a lawn, the prettiest girls of Arles, whose little dark heads showed delicately from beneath their lace fichus; farther down were the dancers from Barbantane—eight tambourine players in a line, ready to begin, their hands joined, ribbons flying, hats cocked, and the red scarves round their hips; beyond them, on the succeeding terraces, were the choral societies in rows, dressed in black with red caps, their standard-bearer in front, grave, important, his teeth clinched, holding high his carved staff; farther down still, on a vast circular space now arranged as an amphitheatre, were the black bulls, and the herdsmen from Camargue, seated on their long-haired white horses, their high boots over their knees, at their wrists an uplifted spear; then more flags, helmets, bayonets, and decorations right down to the triumphal arch at the gates; as far as the eye could see, on the other side of the Rhone (across which the two railways had made a pontoon bridge that they might come straight from the station to Saint-Romans), whole villages were assembling from every side, crowding to the Giffas road in a cloud of dust and a confusion of cries, sitting at the hedge-sides, clinging to the elms, squeezed in carts—a

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living wall for the procession. Above all a great white sun which scintillated in every direction—on the copper of a tambourine, on the point of a trident, on the fringe of a banner; and in the midst the great proud Rhone carrying to the sea the moving picture of this royal feast. Before these marvels, where shone all the gold of his coffers, the Nabob had a sudden feeling of admiration and of pride.

"This is beautiful," he said, paling; and behind him his mother murmured, "It is too beautiful for man. It is as if God were coming." She was pale, too, but with an unutterable fear.

The sentiment of the old Catholic peasant was indeed that which was vaguely felt by all those people massed upon the roads as though for the passing of a gigantic Corpus Christi procession, and whom this visit of an Eastern prince to a child of their own country reminded of the legends of the Magi, or the advent of Gaspard the Moor, bringing to the carpenter's son myrrh and the triple crown.

As Jansoulet was being warmly congratulated by every one, Cardailhac, who had not been seen since morning, suddenly appeared, triumphant and perspiring. "Didn't I tell you there was something to work on! Eh? Isn't it fine? What a scene! I bet our Parisians would pay dear to be at such a first performance as this!" And lowering his voice, on account of the mother who was quite near, "Have you seen our country girls? No? Examine them more closely—the first, the one in front, who is to present the bouquet."

"Why, it is Amy Férat!"

"Just so. You see, old fellow, if the Bey should throw his handkerchief amid that group of loveliness there must be some one to pick it up. They wouldn't understand, these innocents. Oh, I have thought of everything, you will see. Everything is prepared and regulated just as on the stage. Garden side—farm side."

Here, to give an idea of the perfect organization, the manager raised his stick. Immediately his gesture was repeated from the top to the bottom of the park, and from the choral societies, from the brass bands, from the tam-

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bourines, there burst forth the majestic strains of the popular southern song, *Grand Soleil de la Provence.* Voices and instruments rose in the sunlight, the banners filled, the dancers swayed to their first movement, while on the other side of the river a report flew like a breeze that the Bey had arrived unexpectedly by another route. The manager made another gesture, and the immense orchestra was hushed. The response was slower this time, there were little delays, a hail of words lost in the leaves; but one could not expect more from a concourse of three thousand people. Just then the carriages appeared, the state coaches which had been used on the occasion of the last Bey's visit —two large chariots, pink and gold as at Tunis. Mme. Jansoulet had tended them almost as holy relics, and they had come out of their coverings, with their panels, their hangings and their gold fringes, as shining and new as the day they were made. Here again Cardailhac's ingenuity had been freely exercised. He had thought horses looked too heavy for those unreal fragilities, so he had harnessed instead eight mules, with white reins, decorated with bows and pompons and bells, and caparisoned from head to foot in that marvellous Esparto work—an art Provence has borrowed from the Moors and perfected. How could the Bey not be pleased!

The Nabob, Monpavon, the prefect, and one of the generals got into the first coach; the others filled the succeeding carriages. The priests and the mayors, swelling with importance, rushed to the head of the choral societies of their villages which were to go in front, and all moved off along the road to Giffas.

The weather was magnificent, but hot and heavy, three months in advance of the season, as often happens in this impetuous country, where everything is in a hurry and comes too soon. Although there was not a cloud to be seen, the stillness of the atmosphere—the wind had fallen suddenly like a loose sail—dazzling and heated white, a silent solemnity hanging over all, foretold a storm brewing in some corner of the horizon. The immense torpor of things gradually influenced the living beings. One heard

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too distinctly the tinkling mule-bells, the heavy steps in the dust of the band of singers whom Cardailhac was placing at regular distances in the seething human hedge which bordered the road and was lost in the distance; a sudden call, children's voices, and the cry of the water-seller, that necessary accompaniment of all open-air festivals in the Midi.

"Open your window, general, it is stifling," said Monpavon, crimson, fearing for his paint, and the lowered windows exposed to the populace these high functionaries mopping their august faces, strained, agonized, by the same expression of waiting—waiting for the Bey, for the storm, waiting for something, in short.

Still another triumphal arch. It was at Giffas, its long, stony street strewn with green palms, and its sordid houses gay with flowers and bright hangings. The station was outside the village, white and square, stuck like a thimble on the roadside—true type of a little country station, lost in the midst of vineyards, never having any one in it except perhaps sometimes an old woman and her parcels waiting in a corner, come three hours before the time.

In honour of the Bey this slight building had been rigged out with flags, adorned with rugs and divans; a splendid buffet had been fitted up with sherbets, all ready for his Highness. Once there and out of the carriage the Nabob tried to dispel the feeling of uneasiness which he, too, had begun to suffer from. Prefects, generals, deputies, people in dress-coats and uniforms, were standing about on the platform in imposing groups, their faces solemn, their mouths pursed, their bodies swaying and jerking in the knowing way of public functionaries who feel people are looking at them. And you can imagine how noses were flattened against the windows to see all this hierarchical swelldom. There was Monpavon, his shirt-front bulging like a whipped egg, Cardailhac breathlessly giving his last orders, and the honest face of Jansoulet, whose sparkling eyes, set over his fat, sunburnt cheeks, looked like two gold nails in a goffering of Spanish leather. Suddenly an electric bell rang. The station-master, in a new uniform, ran

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down the line: "Gentlemen, the train is signalled. It will be here in eight minutes." Every one started, and with the same instinctive movement pulled out their watches. Only six minutes more. Then in the great silence some one said: "Look over there!" To the right, on the side from which the train was to come, two great slopes, covered with vines, made a sort of funnel into which the track disappeared as though swallowed up. Just then all this hollow was as black as ink, darkened by an enormous cloud, a bar of gloom, cutting the blue of the sky perpendicularly, throwing out banks that resembled cliffs of basalt on which the light broke all white like moonshine. In the solemnity of the deserted track, over the lines of silent rails where one felt that everything was ready for the coming of the prince, it was terrifying to see this aërial crag approaching, throwing its shadow before it, to watch the play of the perspective which gave the cloud a slow, majestic movement, and the shadow the rapidity of a galloping horse. "What a storm we shall have directly!" was the thought which came to every one, but none had voice to express it, for a strident whistle sounded and the train appeared at the end of the dark funnel. A real royal train, rapid and short, and decorated with flags. The smoking, roaring engine carried a large bouquet of roses on its breastplate, like a bridesmaid at some leviathan wedding.

It came out of the funnel at full speed, but slowed down as it approached. The functionaries grouped themselves, straightened their backs, hitched their swords and eased their collars, while Jansoulet went down the track to meet the train, an obsequious smile on his lips, his back curved already for the "Salam Alek." The train proceeded very slowly. Jansoulet thought it had stopped, and put his hand on the door of the royal carriage, glittering with gold under the black sky. But, doubtless, the impetus had been too strong, the train continued to advance, the Nabob walking beside it, trying to open the accursed door which was stuck fast, and making signs to the engine-driver. The engine was not answering. "Stop, stop, there!" It did not stop. Losing patience, he jumped on to the velvet-covered step,

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and in that fiery, impulsive manner of his which had so delighted the old Bey, he cried, his woolly head at the door, "Saint-Romans station, your Highness."

You know the sort of vague light there is in dreams, the colourless empty atmosphere where everything has the look of a phantom. Jansoulet was suddenly enveloped in this, stricken, paralyzed. He wanted to speak, words would not come, his nerveless hand held the door so feebly that he almost fell backward. What had he seen? On a divan at the back of the saloon, reposing on his elbow, his beautiful dark head with its long silky beard leaning on his hand, was the Bey, close wrapped in his Oriental coat, without other ornaments than the large ribbon of the Legion of Honour across his breast and the diamond in the aigrette of his fez. He was fanning himself impassively with a little fan of gold-embroidered strawwork. Two aides-de-camp and an engineer of the railway company were standing beside him. Opposite, on another divan, in a respectful attitude, but favoured evidently, as they were the only ones seated in the Bey's presence, were two owl-like men, their long whiskers falling on their white ties, one fat and the other thin. They were the Hemerlingues, father and son, who had won over his Highness and were bearing him off in triumph to Paris. What a horrible dream! All three men, who knew Jansoulet well, looked at him coldly as though his face recalled nothing. Piteously white, his forehead covered with sweat, he stammered, "But, your Highness, are you not going to—" A vivid flash of lightning, followed by a terrible peal of thunder, stopped the words. But the lightning in the eyes of his sovereign seemed to him as terrible. Sitting up, his arm outstretched, in guttural voice as of one accustomed to roll the hard Arab syllables, but in pure French, the Bey struck him down with slow, carefully prepared words: "Go home, swindler. The feet go where the heart guides. Mine will never enter the house of the man who has cheated my country."

Jansoulet tried to say something. The Bey made a sign: "Go on." The engineer pressed a button, a whistle replied,

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the train, which had never really stopped, seemed to stretch itself, making all its iron muscles crack, to take a bound and start off at full speed, the flags fluttering in the storm-wind, and the black smoke meeting the lightning flashes.

Jansoulet, left standing on the track, staggering, stunned, ruined, watched his fortune fly away and disappear, oblivious of the large drops of rain which were falling on his bare head. Then, when the others rushed upon him, surrounded him, rained questions upon him, he stuttered some disconnected words: "Court intrigues — infamous plot." And suddenly, shaking his fist after the train, with eyes that were bloodshot, and a foam of rage upon his lips, he roared like a wild beast, "Blackguards!"

"You forget yourself, Jansoulet, you forget yourself." You guess who it was that uttered those words, and, taking the Nabob's arm, tried to pull him together, to make him hold his head as high as his own, conducted him to the carriage through the rows of stupefied people in uniform, and made him get in, exhausted and broken, like a near relation of the deceased that one hoists into a mourning-coach after the funeral. The rain began to fall, peals of thunder followed one another. Every one now hurried into the carriages, which quickly took the homeward road. Then there occurred a heart-rending yet comical thing, one of the cruel farces played by that cowardly destiny which kicks its victims after they are down. In the falling day and the growing darkness of the cyclone, the crowd, squeezed round the approaches of the station, thought they saw his Highness somewhere amid the gorgeous trappings, and as soon as the wheels started an immense clamour, a frightful bawling, which had been hatching for an hour in all those breasts, burst out, rose, rolled, rebounded from side to side and prolonged itself in the valley. "Hurrah, hurrah for the Bey!" This was the signal for the first bands to begin, the choral societies started in their turn, and the noise growing step by step, the road from Giffas to Saint-Romans was nothing but an uninterrupted bellow. Cardailhac and all the gentlemen, Jansoulet himself, leant in vain out of the windows making desperate signs, "That will do! That's enough!" Their

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gestures were lost in the tumult and the darkness; what the crowd did see seemed to act only as an excitant. And I promise you there was no need of that. All these meridionals, whose enthusiasm had been carefully fed since early morning, excited the more by the long wait and the storm, shouted with all the force of their voices and the strength of their lungs, mingling with the song of Provence the cry of "Hurrah for the Bey!" till it seemed a perpetual chorus. Most of them had no idea what a Bey was, did not even think about it. They accentuated the appellation in an extraordinary manner as though it had three b's and ten y's. But it made no difference, they excited themselves with the cry, holding up their hands, waving their hats, becoming agitated as a result of their own activity. Women wept and rubbed their eyes. Suddenly, from the top of an elm, the shrill voice of a child made itself heard: "Mamma, mamma —I see him!" He saw him! They all saw him, for that matter! Now even, they will all swear to you they saw him!

Confronted by such a delirium, in the impossibility of imposing silence and calm on such a crowd, there was only one thing for the people in the carriages to do: to leave them alone, pull up the windows and dash along at full speed. It would at least shorten a bitter martyrdom. But this was even worse. Seeing the procession hurrying, all the road began to gallop with it. To the dull booming of their tambourines the dancers from Barbantane, hand in hand, sprang—a living garland—round the carriage doors. The choral societies, breathless with singing as they ran, but singing all the same, dragged on their standard-bearers, the banners now hanging over their shoulders; and the good, fat priests, red and panting, shoving their vast overworked bellies before them, still found strength to shout into the very ear of the mules, in an unctuous, effusive voice, "Long live our noble Bey!" The rain on all this, the rain falling in buckets, discolouring the pink coaches, precipitating the disorder, giving the appearance of a rout to this triumphal return, but a comic rout, mingled with songs and laughs, mad embraces, and infernal oaths. It was something like the return of a religious procession flying before a storm,

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cassocks turned up, surplices over heads, and the Blessed Sacrament put back in all haste, under a porch.

The dull roll of the wheels over the wooden bridge told the poor Nabob, motionless and silent in a corner of his carriage, that they were almost there. "At last!" he said, looking through the clouded windows at the foaming waters of the Rhone, whose tempestuous rush seemed a calm after what he had just suffered. But at the end of the bridge, when the first carriage reached the great triumphal arch, rockets went off, drums beat, saluting the monarch as he entered the estates of his faithful subject. To crown the irony, in the gathering darkness a gigantic flare of gas suddenly illuminated the roof of the castle, and, in spite of the wind and the rain, these fiery letters could still be seen very plainly, "Long liv' th' B'Y 'HMED!"

"That—that is the wind-up," said the poor Nabob, who could not help laughing, though it was a very piteous and bitter laugh. But no, he was mistaken. The end was the bouquet waiting at the castle door. Amy Férat came to present it, leaving the group of country maidens under the veranda, where they were trying to shelter the shining silks of their skirts and the embroidered velvets of their caps as they waited for the first carriage. Her bunch of flowers in her hand, modest, her eyes downcast, but showing a roguish leg, the pretty actress sprang forward to the door in a low courtesy, almost on her knees, a pose she had worked at for a week. Instead of the Bey, Jansoulet got out, stiff and troubled, and passed without even seeing her. And as she stayed there, bouquet in hand, with the silly look of a stage fairy who has missed her cue, Cardailhac said to her with the ready chaff of the Parisian who is never at a loss: "Take away your flowers, my dear. The Bey is not coming. He had forgotten his handkerchief, and as it is only with that he speaks to ladies, you understand——"

Now it is night. Everything is asleep at Saint-Romans after the tremendous uproar of the day. Torrents of rain continue to fall; and in the park, where the triumphal arches

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and the Venetian masts still lift vaguely their soaking carcasses, one can hear streams rushing down the slopes transformed into waterfalls. Everything streams or drips. A noise of water, an immense noise of water. Alone in his sumptuous room, with its lordly bed all hung with purple silks, the Nabob is still awake, turning over his own black thoughts as he strides to and fro. It is not the affront, that public outrage before all those people, that occupies him, it is not even the gross insult the Bey had flung at him in the presence of his mortal enemies. No, this southerner, whose sensations were all physical and as rapid as the firing of new guns, had already thrown off the venom of his rancour. And then, court favourites, by famous examples, are always prepared for these sudden falls. What terrifies him is that which he guesses to lie behind this affront. He reflects that all his possessions are over there, firms, counting-houses, ships, all at the mercy of the Bey, in that lawless East, that country of the ruler's good-pleasure. Pressing his burning brow to the streaming windows, his body in a cold sweat, his hands icy, he remains looking vaguely out into the night, as dark, as obscure as his own future.

Suddenly a noise of footsteps, of precipitate knocks at the door.

"Who is there?"

"Sir," said Noël, coming in half dressed, "it is a very urgent telegram that has been sent from the post-office by special messenger."

"A telegram! What can there be now?"

He takes the envelope and opens it with shaking fingers. The god, struck twice already, begins to feel himself vulnerable, to know the fears, the nervous weakness of other men. Quick—to the signature. MORA! Is it possible? The duke—the duke to him! Yes, it is indeed—M-O-R-A. And above it: "Popolasca is dead. Election coming in Corsica. You are official candidate."

Deputy! It was salvation. With that, nothing to fear. No one dares treat a representative of the great French nation as a mere swindler. The Hemerlingues were finely defeated.

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"Oh, my duke, my noble duke!"

He was so full of emotion that he could not sign his name. Suddenly: "Where is the man who brought this telegram?"

"Here, M. Jansoulet," replied a jolly south-country voice from the corridor.

He was lucky, that postman.

"Come in," said the Nabob. And giving him the receipt, he took in a heap from his pockets—ever full—as many gold pieces as his hands could hold, and threw them into the cap of the poor fellow, who stuttered, distracted and dazzled by the fortune showered upon him, in the night of this fairy palace.

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XII

A CORSICAN ELECTION

Pozzonegro—near Sartène.

At last I can give you my news, dear M. Joyeuse. During the five days we have been in Corsica we have rushed about so much, made so many speeches, so often changed carriages and mounts—now on mules, now on asses, or even on the backs of men for crossing the torrents—written so many letters, noted so many requests, visited so many schools, presented chasubles, altar-cloths, renewed cracked bells, and founded kindergartens; we have inaugurated so many things, proposed so many toasts, listened to so many harangues, consumed so much Talano wine and white cheese, that I have not found time to send even a greeting to the little family circle round the big table, from which I have been missing these two months. Happily my absence will not be for much longer, as we expect to leave the day after to-morrow, and are coming straight back to Paris. From the electioneering point of view, I think our journey has been a success. Corsica is an admirable country, indolent and poor, a mixture of poverty and pride, which makes both the nobles and the middle classes strive to keep up an appearance of easy circumstances at the price of the most painful privations. They speak quite seriously of Popolasca's fortune—that needy deputy whom death robbed of the four thousand pounds his resignation in favour of the Nabob would have brought him. All these people have, as well, an administrative mania, a thirst for places which give them any sort of uniform, and a cap to wear with the words "Government official" written on it. If you gave a Corsican peasant the choice between the richest farm in France and the shabbiest sword-belt of a village policeman, he

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would not hesitate and would take the belt. In that condition of things, you may imagine what chances of election a candidate has who can dispose of a personal fortune and the Government favours. Thus, M. Jansoulet will be elected; and especially if he succeeds in his present undertaking, which has brought us here to the only inn of a little place called Pozzonegro (black well). It is a regular well, black with foliage, consisting of fifty small red-stone houses clustered round a long Italian church, at the bottom of a ravine between rigid hills and coloured sand-stone rocks, over which stretch immense forests of larch and juniper trees. From my open window, at which I am writing, I see up above there a bit of blue sky, the orifice of the well; down below on the little square—which a huge nut-tree shades as though the shadows were not already thick enough—two shepherds clothed in sheep-skins are playing at cards, with their elbows on the stone of a fountain. Gambling is the bane of this land of idleness, where they get men from Lucca to do their harvesting. The two poor wretches I see probably haven't a farthing between them, but one bets his knife against a cheese wrapped up in vine leaves, and the stakes lie between them on the bench. A little priest smokes his cigar as he watches them, and seems to take the liveliest interest in their game.

And that is all. Not a sound anywhere except the drops of water on the stone, the oaths of one of the players who swears by the *sango del seminaro*, and from underneath my room in the inn parlour the eager voice of our friend mingling with the splutterings of the illustrious Paganetti, who is interpreter, in his conversation with the not less illustrious Piedigriggio.

M. Piedigriggio (gray feet) is a local celebrity. He is a tall, old man of seventy-five, with a flowing beard and a straight back. He wears a little pilot coat, a brown wool Catalonian cap on his white locks. At his belt he carries a pair of scissors to cut the long leaves of the green tobacco he smokes into the hollow of his hand. A venerable-looking person in fact, and when he crossed the square, shaking hands with the priest, smiling protectingly at the gam-

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blers, I would never have believed that I was looking at the famous brigand Piedigriggio, who held the woods in Monte-Rotondo from 1840 to 1860, outwitted the police and the military, and who to-day, thanks to the proscription by which he benefits, after seven or eight cold-blooded murders, moves peaceably about in the country which witnessed his crimes, and enjoys a considerable importance. This is why: Piedigriggio has two sons who, nobly following in his footsteps, have taken to the carbine and the woods, in their turn not to be found, not to be caught, as their father was, for twenty years; warned by the shepherds of the movements of the police, when the latter leave a village, they make their appearance in it. The eldest, Scipio, came to mass last Sunday at Pozzonegro. To say they love them, and that the bloody hand-shake of those wretches is a pleasure to all who harbour them, would be to calumniate the peaceful inhabitants of this parish. But they fear them, and their will is law.

Now, these Piedigriggios have taken it into their heads to favour our opponent in the election. And their influence is a formidable power, for they can make two whole cantons vote against us. They have long legs, the rascals, as long in proportion as the reach of their guns. Naturally, we have the police on our side, but the brigands are far more powerful. As our innkeeper said this morning: "The police, they go away; *mà* the *banditti* they stay." In the face of this logical reasoning we understood that the only thing to be done was to treat with the Gray-feet, to try a "job," in fact. The mayor said something of this to the old man, who consulted his sons, and it is the conditions of this treaty they are discussing downstairs. I hear the voice of our general director, "Come, my dear fellow, you know I am an old Corsican myself," and then the other's quiet replies, broken, like his tobacco, by the irritating noise of his scissors. The "dear fellow" does not seem to have much confidence, and until the coin is ringing upon the table I fancy there will not be any advance.

You see, Paganetti is known in his native country. The

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worth of his word is written on the square in Corte, still waiting for the monument to Paoli, on the vast fields of carrots which he has managed to plant on the Island of Ithaca, in the gaping empty purses of all those unfortunate small tradesmen, village priests, and petty nobility, whose poor savings he has swallowed up dazzling their eyes with chimerical *combinazioni*. Truly, for him to dare to come back here, it needed all his phenomenal audacity, as well as the resources now at his disposal to satisfy all claims.

And, indeed, what truth is there in the fabulous works undertaken by the Territorial Bank?

None.

Mines, which produce nothing and never will produce anything, for they exist only on paper; quarries, which are still innocent of pick or dynamite, tracts of uncultivated sandy land that they survey with a gesture, telling you, "We begin here, and we go right over there, as far as you like." It is the same with the forests. The whole of a wooded hill in Monte-Rotondo belongs to us, it seems, but the felling of the trees is impossible unless aeronauts undertake the woodman's work. It is the same with the watering-places, among which this miserable hamlet of Pozzonegro is one of the most important, with its fountain whose astonishing ferruginous properties Paganetti advertises. Of the steamers, not a shadow. Stay—an old, half-ruined Genoese tower on the shore of the Gulf of Ajaccio bears on a tarnished escutcheon, above its hermetically sealed doors, this inscription: "Paganetti's Agency. Maritime Company. Inquiry Office." Fat, gray lizards tend the office in company with an owl. As for the railways, all these honest Corsicans to whom I spoke of it smiled knowingly, replied with winks and mysterious hints, and it was only this morning that I had the exceedingly buffoonish explanation of all this reticence.

I had read among the documents which the director-general flaunts in our eyes from time to time, like a fan to puff up his impostures, the bill of sale of a marble quarry at a place said to be "Taverna," two hours' distance from Pozzonegro. Profiting by our stay here, I got on a mule

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this morning, without telling any one, and guided by a tall scamp of a fellow with legs like a deer—true type of a Corsican poacher or smuggler, his thick, red pipe in his mouth, his gun in a bandoleer—I went to Taverna. After a fearful progress across cracked rocks and bogs, past abysses of unsoundable depths—on the very edges of which my mule maliciously walked as though to mark them out with her shoes—we arrived, by an almost perpendicular descent, at the end of our journey. It was a vast desert of rocks, absolutely bare, all white with the droppings of gulls and sea-fowl, for the sea is at the bottom, quite near, and the silence of the place was broken only by the flow of the waves and the shrill cries of the wheeling circles of birds. My guide, who has a holy horror of excisemen and the police, stayed above on the cliff, because of a little coastguard station posted like a watchman on the shore. I made for a large red building which still maintained, in this burning solitude, its three stories, in spite of broken windows and ruinous tiles. Over the worm-eaten door was an immense sign-board: "Territorial Bank. Carr——bre——54." The wind, the sun, the rain, have wiped out the rest.

There has been there, certainly, a commencement of operations, for a large square, gaping hole, cut out with a punch, is still open in the ground, showing along its crumbling sides, like a leopard's spots, red slabs with brown veins, and at the bottom, in the brambles, enormous blocks of the marble, called in the trade "black-heart" (marble spotted with red and brown), condemned blocks that no one could make anything of for want of a road leading to the quarry or a harbour to make the coast accessible for freight ships, and for want, above all, of subsidies considerable enough to carry out one or the other of these two projects. So the quarry remains abandoned, at a few cable-lengths from the shore, as cumbrous and useless as Robinson Crusoe's canoe in the same unfortunate circumstances. These details of the heart-rending story of our sole territorial wealth were furnished by a miserable caretaker, shaking with fever, whom I found in the low-ceilinged room

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of the yellow house trying to roast a piece of kid over the acrid smoke of a pistachio bush.

This man, who in himself is the whole staff of the Territorial Bank in Corsica, is Paganetti's foster-father, an old lighthouse-keeper upon whom the solitude does not weigh. Our director-general leaves him there partly for charity and partly because letters dated from the Taverna quarry, now and again, make a good show at the shareholders' meetings. I had the greatest difficulty in extracting a little information from this poor creature, three parts savage, who looked upon me with cautious mistrust, half hidden behind the long hair of his goat-skin *pelone*. He told me, however, without intending it, what the Corsicans understand by the word "railway," and why they put on mysterious airs when they speak of it. As I was trying to find out if he knew anything about the scheme for a railway in the country, this old man, instead of smiling knowingly like his compatriots, said, quite naturally, in passable French, his voice rusty and benumbed like an ancient, little-used lock:

"Oh, sir, no need of a railway here."

"But it would be most valuable, most useful; it would facilitate communications."

"I don't say no; but with the police we have enough here."

"The policemen?"

"Certainly."

This *quid pro quo* went on for some five minutes before I discovered that here the secret police service is called "the railway." As there are many Corsican policemen on the Continent they use this euphemism to designate the ignoble calling they follow. You inquire of the relations, "Where is your brother Ambrosini? What is your uncle Barbicaglia doing?" They will answer with a little wink, "He has a place on the railway," and every one knows what that means. Among the people, the peasants, who have never seen a railway and don't know what it is, it is quite seriously believed that the great occult administration of the Imperial police has no other name than

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that. Our principal agent in the country shares this touching simplicity of belief. It shows you the real state of the "Line from Ajaccio to Bastia, passing by Bonifacio, Porto Vecchio, etc.," as it is written on the big, green-backed books of the house of Paganetti. In fact all the goods of the Territorial Bank consist of a few sign-boards and two ruins, the whole not worthy of lying in the "old materials" yard in the Rue Saint-Ferdinand; every night as I go to sleep I hear the old vanes grating and the old doors banging on emptiness.

But, in this case, where have gone, where are going now, the enormous sums M. Jansoulet has spent during the last five months—not to count what came from outside, attracted by the magic of his name? I thought, as you did, that all those soundings, borings, purchasings of land that the books set forth in fine round-hand were exaggerated beyond measure. But who could suspect such effrontery? This is why the director was so opposed to the idea of bringing me on the electioneering trip. I don't want to have an explanation now. My poor Nabob has quite enough trouble in this election. Only, whenever we get back, I shall lay before him all the details of my long inquiry, and, whether he wants it or not, I will get him out of this den of thieves. They have finished below. Old Piedigriggio is crossing the square, pulling up the slip-knot of his long peasant's purse, which looks to me well filled. The bargain is made, I conclude. Good-bye, hurriedly, my dear M. Joyeuse; remember me to your daughters and ask them to keep a tiny little place for me round the work-table.

PAUL DE GÉRY.

The electioneering whirlwind which had enveloped them in Corsica, crossed the sea behind them like a blast of the sirocco and filled the flat in the Place Vendôme with a mad wind of folly. It was overrun from morning to night by the habitual element, augmented now by a constant arrival of little dark men, brown as the locust-bean, with regular features and thick beards, some turbulent and talkative, like Paganetti, others silent, self-contained and dog-

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matic: the two types of the race upon which the same climate produces different effects. All these famished islanders, in the depths of their savage country, promised each other to meet at the Nabob's table. His house had become an inn, a restaurant, a market-place. In the dining-room, where the table was kept constantly laid, there was always to be found some newly arrived Corsican, with the bewildered and greedy appearance of a country cousin, having something to eat.

The boasting, clamorous race of election agents is the same everywhere; but these were unusually fiery, had a zeal even more impassioned and the vanity of turkey-cocks, all worked up to white heat. The most insignificant recorder, inspector, mayor's secretary, village schoolmaster, spoke as if he had the whole country behind him, and the pockets of his threadbare black coat full of votes. And it is a fact, in Corsican parishes (Jansoulet had seen it for himself) families are so old, have sprung from so little, have so many ramifications, that any poor fellow breaking stones on the road is able to claim relationship with the greatest personages of the island, and is thereby able to exert a serious influence. These complications are aggravated still more by the national temperament, which is proud, secretive, scheming, and vindictive; so it follows that one has to be careful how one walks amid the network of threads stretching from one extremity of the people to the other.

The worst was that all these people were jealous of each other, detested each other, and quarrelled across the table about the election, exchanging black looks and grasping the handles of their knives at the least contradiction. They spoke very loud and all at once, some in the hard, sonorous Genoese dialect, and others in the most comical French, all choking with suppressed oaths. They threw in each other's teeth names of unknown villages, dates of local scandals, which suddenly revived between two fellow guests two centuries of family hatreds. The Nabob was afraid of seeing his luncheons end tragically, and strove to calm all this violence and conciliate them with his large good-natured smile. But Paganetti reassured him. According to

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him, the vendetta, though still existing in Corsica, no longer employs the stiletto or the rifle except very rarely, and among the lowest classes. The anonymous letter has taken their place. Indeed, every day unsigned letters were received at the Place Vendôme written in this style:

"M. Jansoulet, you are so generous that I cannot do less than point out to you that the Sieur Bornalinco (Ange-Marie) is a traitor, bought by your enemies. I could say very differently about his cousin Bornalinco (Louis-Thomas), who is devoted to the good cause, etc."

Or again:

"M. Jansoulet, I fear your chances of election will come to nothing, and are on a poor foundation for success if you continue to employ one named Castirla (Josué), of the parish of Omessa. His relative, Luciani, is the man you need."

Although he no longer read any of these missives, the poor candidate suffered from the disturbing effect of all these doubts and of all these unchained passions. Caught in the gearing of those small intrigues, full of fears, mistrustful, curious, feverish, he felt in every aching nerve the truth of the Corsican proverb, "The greatest ill you can wish your enemy is an election in his house."

It may be imagined that the check-book and the three deep drawers in the mahogany cabinet were not spared by this horde of devouring locusts which had fallen upon "Moussiou Jansoulet's" dwelling. Nothing could be more comic than the haughty manner in which these good islanders effected their loans, briskly, and with an air of defiance. At the same time it was not they who were the worst —except for the boxes of cigars which sank into their pockets as though they all meant to open a "Civette" on their return to their own country. For just as the very hot weather inflames and envenoms old sores, so the election had given an astonishing new growth to the pillaging already established in the house. Money was demanded for advertising expenses, for Moëssard's articles, which were sent to Corsica in bales of thousands of copies, with portraits, biographies, pamphlets—all the printed clamour that it was pos-

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sible to raise round a name. And always the usual work of the suction-pumps went on, those pumps now fixed to this great reservoir of millions. Here, the Bethlehem Society, a powerful machine working with regular, slow-recurring strokes, full of impetus; the Territorial Bank, a marvellous exhauster, indefatigable, with triple and quadruple rows of pumps, several thousand horse-power, the Schwalbach pump, the Bois l'Héry pump, and how many others as well? Some enormous and noisy with screaming pistons, some quite dumb and discreet with clack-valves knowingly oiled, pumps with tiny valves, dear little pumps as fine as the stings of insects, and like them leaving a poison in the place whence they have drawn life; all working together and bound to bring about if not a complete drought, at least a serious lowering of level.

Already evil rumours, vague as yet, were going the round of the Bourse. Was this a move of the enemy? For Jansoulet was waging a furious money war against Hemerlingue, trying to thwart all his financial operations, and was losing considerable sums at the game. He had against him his own fury, his adversary's coolness, and the blunderings of Paganetti, who was his man of straw. In any case his golden star was no longer in the ascendant. Paul de Géry knew this through Joyeuse, who was now a stock-broker's accountant and well up in the doings on the Bourse. What troubled him most, however, was the Nabob's singular agitation, his need of constant distraction which had succeeded his former splendid calm of strength and security, the loss, too, of his southern sobriety. He kept himself in a continual state of excitement, drinking great glasses of *raki* before his meals, laughing long, talking loud, like a rough sailor ashore. You felt that here was a man overdoing himself to escape from some heavy care. It showed, however, in the sudden contraction of all the muscles of his face, as some unhappy thought crossed his mind, or when he feverishly turned the pages of his little gilt-edged note-book. The serious interview that Paul wanted so much Jansoulet would not give him at any price. He spent his nights at the club, his mornings in bed,

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and from the moment he awoke his room was full of people who talked to him as he dressed, and to whom he replied, sponge in hand. If, by a miracle, de Géry caught him alone for a second, he fled, stopping his words with a "Not now, not now, I beg of you." In the end the young man had recourse to drastic measures.

One morning, towards five o'clock, when Jansoulet came home from his club, he found a letter on the table near his bed. At first he took it to be one of the many anonymous denunciations he received daily. It was indeed a denunciation, but it was signed and undisguised; and it breathed in every word the loyalty and the earnest youthfulness of him who wrote it. De Géry pointed out very clearly all the infamies and all the double dealing which surrounded him. With no beating about the bush he called the rogues by their names. There was not one of the usual guests whom he did not suspect, not one who came with any other object than to steal and to lie. From the top to the bottom of the house all was pillage and waste. Bois l'Héry's horses were unsound, Schwalbach's gallery was a swindle, Moëssard's articles a recognised blackmail. De Géry had made a long detailed memorandum of these scandalous abuses, with proofs in support of it. But he specially recommended to Jansoulet's attention the accounts of the Territorial Bank as the real danger of the situation. Attracted by the Nabob's name, as chairman of the company, hundreds of shareholders had fallen into the infamous trap—poor seekers of gold, following the lucky miner. In the other matters it was only money he lost; here his honour was at stake. He would discover what a terrible responsibility lay upon him if he examined the papers of the business, which was only deception and cheatery from one end to the other.

"You will find the memorandum of which I speak," said Paul de Géry, at the end of his letter, "in the top drawer of my desk along with sundry receipts. I have not put them in your room, because I mistrust Noël like the rest. When I go away to-night I will give you the key. For I am going away, my dear benefactor and friend, I am

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going away full of gratitude for the good you have done me, and heartbroken that your blind confidence has prevented me from repaying you even in part. As things are now, my conscience as an honest man will not let me stay any longer useless at my post. I am looking on at a disaster, at the sack of a palace, which I can do nothing to prevent. My heart burns at all I see. I give handshakes which shame me. I am your friend, and I seem their accomplice. And who knows that if I went on living in such an atmosphere I might not become one?"

This letter, which he read slowly and carefully, even between the lines and through the words, made so great an impression on the Nabob that, instead of going to bed, he went at once to find his young secretary. De Géry had a study at the end of the row of public rooms where he slept on a sofa. It had been a provisional arrangement, but he had preferred not to change it.

The house was still asleep. As he was crossing the lofty rooms, filled with the vague light of a Parisian dawn (those blinds were never lowered, as no evening receptions were held there), the Nabob stopped, struck by the look of sad defilement his luxury wore. In the heavy odour of tobacco and various liqueurs which hung over everything, the furniture, the ceilings, the woodwork could be seen, already faded and still new. Spots on the crumpled satins, ashes staining the beautiful marbles, dirty footmarks on the carpets. It reminded one of a huge first-class railway carriage incrusted with all the laziness, the impatience, the boredom of a long journey, and all the wasteful, spoiling disdain of the public for a luxury for which it has paid. In the middle of this set scene, still warm from the atrocious comedy played there every day, his own image, reflected in twenty cold and staring looking-glasses, stood out before him, forbidding yet comical, in absolute contrast to his elegant clothes, his eyes swollen, his face bloated and inflamed.

What an obvious and disenchanting to-morrow to the mad life he was leading!

He lost himself for a moment in dreary thought; then he

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gave his shoulders a vigorous shake, a movement frequent with him—it was like a peddler shifting his pack—as though to rid himself of too cruel cares, and again took up the burden every man carries with him, which bows his back, more or less, according to his courage or his strength, and went into de Géry's room, who was already up, standing at his desk sorting papers.

"First of all, my friend," said Jansoulet, softly shutting the door for their interview, "answer me this frankly. Is it really for the motives given in your letter that you have resolved to leave me? Is there not, beneath it all, one of those scandals that I know are being circulated in Paris against me? I am sure you would be loyal enough to warn me and to give me the opportunity of—of clearing myself to you."

Paul assured him that he had no other reasons for going, but that those were surely sufficient, since it was a matter of conscience.

"Then, my boy, listen to me, and I am sure of keeping you. Your letter, so eloquent of honesty and sincerity, has told me nothing that I have not been convinced of for three months. Yes, my dear Paul, you were right. Paris is more complicated than I thought. What I needed, when I arrived, was an honest and disinterested cicerone to put me on my guard against people and things. I met only swindlers. Every worthless rascal in the town has left the mud of his boots on my carpets. I was looking at them just now—my poor drawing-rooms. They need a fine sweeping out. And I swear to you they shall have it, by God, and with no light hand! But I must wait for that until I am a deputy. All these scoundrels are of use to me for the election, and this election is far too necessary now for me to risk losing the smallest chance. In a word, this is the situation: Not only does the Bey mean to keep the money I lent him three months ago, but he has replied to my summons by a counter action for eighty millions, the sum out of which he says I cheated his brother. It is a frightful theft, an audacious libel. My fortune is mine, my own. I made it by my trade as a merchant. I had Ahmed's fa-

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vour; he gave me the opportunity of becoming rich. It is possible I may have put on the screw a little tightly sometimes. But one must not judge these things from a European standpoint. Over there, the enormous profits the Levantines make is an accepted fact—a known thing. It is the ransom those savages pay for the western comfort we bring them. That wretch Hemerlingue, who is suggesting all this persecution against me, has done just as much. But what is the use of talking? I am in the lion's jaws. While waiting for me to go to defend myself at his tribunals—and how I know it, the justice of the Orient!—the Bey has begun by putting an embargo on all my goods, ships, and palaces, and what they contain. The affair was conducted quite regularly by a decree of the Supreme Court. Young Hemerlingue had a hand in that, you can see. If I am made a deputy, it is only a joke. The court takes back its decree and they give me back my treasure with every sort of excuse. If I am not elected I lose everything, sixty, eighty millions, even the possibility of making another fortune. It is ruin, disgrace, dishonour. Are you going to abandon me in such a crisis? Think—I have only you in the whole world. My wife—you have seen her, you know what help, what support she is to her husband. My children—I might as well not have any. I never see them; they would scarcely know me in the street. My horrible wealth has killed all affection around me and has enveloped me with shameless self-seeking. I have only my mother to love me, and she is far away, and you who came to me from my mother. No, you will not leave me alone amid all the scandals that are creeping around me. It is awful—if you only knew! At the club, at the play, wherever I go I seem to see the little viper's head of the Baroness Hemerlingue, I hear the echo of her hiss, I feel the venom of her bite. Everywhere mocking looks, conversation stopped when I appear, lying smiles, or kindness mixed with a little pity. And then the deserters, and the people who keep out of the way as at the approach of a misfortune. Look at Félicia Ruys: just as she had finished my bust she pretends that some accident, I know not what,

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has happened to it, in order to avoid having to send it to the *Salon*. I said nothing, I affected to believe her. But I understood that there again was some new evil report. And it is such a disappointment to me. In a crisis as grave as this everything has its importance. My bust in the exhibition, signed by that famous name, would have helped me greatly in Paris. But no—everything falls away, every one fails me. You see now that I cannot do without you. You must not desert me."

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XIII

A DAY OF SPLEEN

FIVE o'clock in the afternoon. Rain since morning and a gray sky low enough to be reached with an umbrella; the close weather which sticks. Mess, mud, nothing but mud, in heavy puddles, in shining trails in the gutters, vainly chased by the street-scrapers and the scavengers, heaved into enormous carts which carry it slowly towards Montreuil—promenading it in triumph through the streets, always moving, and always springing up again, growing through the pavements, splashing the panels of the carriages, the breasts of the horses, the clothes of the passers-by, spattering the windows, the door-steps, the shop-fronts, till one feared that the whole of Paris would sink and disappear under this sorrowful, miry soil where everything dissolves and is lost in mud. And it moves one to pity to see the invasion of this dirt on the whiteness of the new houses, on the parapets of the quays, and on the colonnades of the stone balconies. There is some one, however, who rejoices at the sight—a poor, sick, weary being, lying all her length on a silk-embroidered divan, her chin on her clinched fists. She is looking out gladly through the dripping windows and delighting in all the ugliness.

"Look, my fairy! this is indeed the weather I wanted to-day. See them draggling along! Aren't they hideous? Aren't they dirty? What mire! It is everywhere—in the streets, on the quays, right down to the Seine, right up to the heavens. I tell you, mud is good when one is sad. I would like to play in it, to make sculpture with it—a statue a hundred feet high, that should be called 'My weariness.'"

"But why are you so miserable, dearest?" said the old dancer gently, amiable and pink, and sitting straight in her

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seat for fear of disarranging her hair, which was even more carefully dressed than usual. "Haven't you everything to make you happy?" And for the hundredth time she enumerated in her tranquil voice the reasons for her happiness: her glory, her genius, her beauty, all the men at her feet, the handsomest, the greatest—oh! yes, the very greatest, as this very day— But a terrible howl, like the heart-rending cry of the jackal exasperated by the monotony of his desert, suddenly made all the studio windows shake, and frightened the old and startled little chrysalis back into her cocoon.

A week ago, Félicia's group was finished and sent to the exhibition, leaving her in a state of nervous prostration, moral sickness, and distressful exasperation. It needs all the tireless patience of the fairy, all the magic of her memories constantly evoked, to make life supportable beside this restlessness, this wicked anger, which growls beneath the girl's long silences and suddenly bursts out in a bitter word or in an "Ugh!" of disgust at everything. Her group is hideous; no one will notice it. All the critics are asses. The public? An immense goître with three rows of chains. And yet, the other Sunday, when the Duc de Mora came with the superintendent of the art section to see her exhibits in the studio, she was so happy, so proud of the praise they gave her, so fully delighted with her own work, which she admired from the outside, as though the work of some one else, now that her tools no longer created between her and her work that bond which makes impartial judgment so hard for the artist.

But it is like this every year. The studio stripped of her recent work, her glorious name once again thrown to the unexpected caprice of the public, Félicia's thoughts, now without a visible object, stray in the emptiness of her heart and in the hollowness of her life—that of the woman who leaves the quiet groove—until she be engrossed in some new work. She shuts herself up and will see no one, as though she mistrusted herself. Jenkins is the only person who can help her during these attacks. He seems even to court them, as though he expected something therefrom. She is not pleasant with him, all the same, goodness knows.

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Yesterday, even, he stayed for hours beside this wearied beauty without her speaking to him once. If that be the welcome she is keeping for the great personage who is doing them the honour of dining with them— Here the good Crenmitz, who is quietly turning over all these thoughts as she gazes at the bows on the pointed toes of her slippers, remembers that she has promised to make a dish of Viennese cakes for the dinner of the personage in question, and goes out of the studio, silently, on the tips of her little feet.

The rain falls, the mud deepens; the beautiful sphinx lies still, her eyes lost in the dull horizon. What is she thinking of? What does she see coming there, over those filthy roads, in the falling night, that her lip should take that curve of disgust and her brow that frown? Is she waiting for her fate? A sad fate, that sets forth in such weather, fearless of the darkness and the dirt.

Some one comes into the studio with a heavier tread than the mouse-like step of Constance—the little servant, doubtless; and, without looking round, Félicia says roughly, "Go away! I don't want any one in."

"I should have liked to speak to you very much, all the same," says a friendly voice.

She starts, sits up. Mollified, and almost smiling at this unexpected visitor, she says:

"What—you, young Minerva! How did you get in?"

"Very easily. All the doors are open."

"I am not surprised. Constance is crazy, since this morning, over her dinner."

"Yes, I saw. The anteroom is full of flowers. Who is coming?"

"Oh! a stupid dinner—an official dinner. I don't know how I could— Sit down here, near me. I am so glad to see you."

Paul sat down, a little disturbed. She had never seemed to him so beautiful. In the dusk of the studio, amid the shadowy brilliance of the works of art, bronzes, and tapestries, her pallor was like a soft light, her eyes shone like precious stones, and her long, close-fitting gown revealed the unrestraint of her goddess-like body. Then, she spoke

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so affectionately, she seemed so happy because he had come. Why had he stayed away so long? It was almost a month since they had seen him. Were they no longer friends? He excused himself as best he could—business, a journey. Besides, if he hadn't been there, he had often spoken of her—oh, very often, almost every day.

"Really? And with whom?"

"With——"

He was going to say "With Aline Joyeuse," but a feeling of restraint stopped him, an undefinable sentiment, a sense of shame at pronouncing her name in the studio which had heard so many others. There are things that do not go together, one scarcely knows why. Paul preferred to reply with a falsehood, which brought him at once to the object of his visit.

"With an excellent fellow to whom you have given very unnecessary pain. Come, why have you not finished the poor Nabob's bust? It was a great joy to him, such a very proud thing for him, to have that bust in the exhibition. He counted upon it."

At the Nabob's name she was slightly troubled.

"It is true," she said, "I broke my word. But what do you expect? I am made of caprice. But I really want to take it up again one of these days. See, the cover is over it; all wet, so that the clay does not harden."

"And the accident? You know, we didn't believe in it."

"Then you were wrong. I never lie. It had a fall, a most awful upset; only the clay was fresh, and I easily repaired it. Look!"

With a sweeping gesture she lifted the cover. The Nabob suddenly appeared before them, his jolly face beaming with the pleasure of being portrayed; so like, so tremendously himself, that Paul gave a cry of admiration.

"Isn't it good?" she said artlessly. "Still a few touches here and there—" She had taken the chisel and the little sponge and pushed the stand into what remained of the daylight. "It could be done in a few hours. But it couldn't go to the exhibition. To-day is the 22d; all the exhibits have been in a long time."

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"Bah! With influence——"

She frowned, and her bad expression came back, her mouth turning down.

"That's true. The *protégée* of the Duc de Mora. Oh! you have no need to apologize. I know what people say, and I don't care *that*—" and she threw a little ball of clay at the wall, where it stuck, flat. "Perhaps men, by dint of supposing the thing which is not— But let us leave these infamies alone," she said, holding up her aristocratic little head. "I really want to please you, Minerva. Your friend shall go to the *Salon* this year."

Just then a smell of caramel and warm pastry filled the studio, where the shadows were falling like a fine gray dust, and the fairy appeared, a dish of sweetmeats in her hand. She looked more fairy-like than ever, bedecked and rejuvenated; dressed in a white gown which showed her beautiful arms through sleeves of old lace; they were beautiful still, for the arm is the beauty that fades last.

"Look at my *kuchen,* dearie; they are such a success this time. Oh! I beg your pardon. I did not see you had friends. And it is M. Paul! How are you, M. Paul? Taste one of my cakes."

And the charming old lady, whose dress seemed to lend her an extraordinary vivacity, came towards him, balancing the plate on the tips of her tiny fingers.

"Don't bother him. You can give him some at dinner," said Félicia quietly.

"At dinner?"

The dancer was so astonished that she almost upset her pretty pastries, which looked as light and airy and delicious as herself.

"Yes, he is staying to dine with us. Oh! I beg it of you," she added, with a particular insistence as she saw he was going to refuse, "I beg you to stay. Don't say no. You will be rendering me a real service by staying to-night. Come—I didn't hesitate a few minutes ago."

She had taken his hand; and in truth one might have been struck by a strange disproportion between her request and the supplicating, anxious tone in which it was made.

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Paul still attempted to excuse himself. He was not dressed. How could she propose it!—a dinner at which she would have other guests.

"My dinner? But I will countermand it! That is the kind of person I am. We shall be alone, just the three of us, with Constance."

"But, Félicia, my child, you don't really think of such a thing. Ah, well! And the—the other who will be coming directly."

"I am going to write to him to stay at home, *parbleu!*"

"You unlucky being, it is too late."

"Not at all. It is striking six o'clock. The dinner was for half past seven. You must have this sent to him quickly."

She was writing hastily at a corner of the table.

"What a strange girl, *mon Dieu! mon Dieu!*" murmured the dancer in bewilderment, while Félicia, delighted, transfigured, was joyously sealing her letter.

"There! my excuse is made. Headaches have not been invented for Kadour."

Then, the letter having been despatched:

"Oh, how pleased I am! What a jolly evening we shall have! Do kiss me, Constance! It will not prevent us from doing honour to your *kuchen*, and we shall have the pleasure of seeing you in a pretty toilette which makes you look younger than I do."

This was more than was required to cause the dancer to forgive this new caprice of her dear demon, and the crime of *lèse-majesté* in which she had just been involved against her will. To treat so great a personage so cavalierly! There was no one like her in the world—there was no one like her. As for Paul de Géry, he no longer tried to resist, under the spell once more of that attraction from which he had been able to fancy himself released by absence, but which, from the moment he crossed the threshold of the studio, had put chains on his will, delivered him over, bound and vanquished, to the sentiment which he was quite resolved to combat.

Evidently the dinner—a repast for a veritable *gourmet*,

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superintended by the Austrian lady in its least details—had been prepared for a guest of great mark. From the lofty Kabyle chandelier with its seven branches of carved wood, which cast its light over the table-cloth covered with embroidery, to the long-necked decanters holding the wines within their strange and exquisite form, the sumptuous magnificence of the service, the delicacy of the meats, to which edge was given by a certain unusualness in their selection, revealed the importance of the expected visitor, the anxiety which there had been to please him. The table was certainly that of an artist. Little silver, but superb china, much unity of effect, without the least attempt at matching. The old Rouen, the pink Sèvres, the Dutch glass mounted in old filigree pewter met on this table as on a sideboard devoted to the display of rare curios collected by a connoisseur exclusively for the satisfaction of his taste. A little disorder naturally, in this household equipped at hazard, as choice things could be picked up. The wonderful cruet-stand had lost its stoppers. The chipped salt-cellar allowed its contents to escape on the table-cloth, and at every moment you would hear, "Why! what is become of the mustard-pot?" "What has happened to this fork?" This embarrassed de Géry a little on account of the young mistress of the house, who for her part took no notice of it.

But something made Paul feel still more ill at ease—his anxiety, namely, to know who the privileged guest might be whom he was replacing at this table, who could be treated at once with so much magnificence and so complete an informality. In spite of everything, he felt him present, an offence to his personal dignity, that visitor whose invitation had been cancelled. It was in vain that he tried to forget him; everything brought him back to his mind, even the fine dress of the good fairy sitting opposite him, who still maintained some of the grand airs with which she had equipped herself in advance for the solemn occasion. This thought troubled him, spoiled for him the pleasure of being there.

On the other hand, by contrast, as it happens in all friendships between two people who meet very rarely, never

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had he seen Félicia so affectionate, in such happy temper. It was an overflowing gaiety that was almost childish, one of those warm expansions of feeling that are experienced when a danger has been passed, the reaction of a bright, roaring fire after the emotion of a shipwreck. She laughed heartily, teased Paul about his accent and what she called his *bourgeois* ideas. "For you are a terrible *bourgeois,* you know. But it is that that I like in you. It is an effect of contraries, doubtless; it is because I myself was born under a bridge, in a gust of wind, that I have always liked sedate, reasonable natures."

"Oh, my child, what are you going to have M. Paul think, that you were born under a bridge?" said the good Crenmitz, who could not accustom herself to the exaggeration of certain metaphors, and always took everything literally.

"Let him think what he likes, my fairy. We are not trying to catch him for a husband. I am sure he would not want one of those monsters who are known as female artists. He would think he was marrying the devil. You are quite right, Minerva. Art is a despot. One has to give one's self entirely up to him. To toil in his service, one devotes all the ideal, all the energy, honesty, conscience, that one possesses, so that you have none of these things left for real life, and the completed labour throws you down, strengthless and without a compass, like a dismantled hulk at the mercy of every wave. A sorry acquisition, such a wife!"

"And yet," the young man hazarded timidly, "it seems to me that art, however exigent it be, cannot for all that entirely absorb a woman. What would she do with her affections, of that need to love, to devote herself, which in her, much more than in us, is the spring of all her actions?"

She mused a moment before replying.

"Perhaps you are right, wise Minerva. It is true that there are days when my life rings terribly hollow. I am conscious of abysses, profound chasms in it. Everything that I throw in to fill it up disappears. My finest enthusiasms of the artist are engulfed there and die each time in

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a sigh. And then I think of marriage. A husband; children—a swarm of children, who would roll about the studio; a nest to look after for them all; the satisfaction of that physical activity which is lacking in our existences of artists; regular occupations; high spirits, songs, innocent gaieties, which would oblige you to play instead of thinking in the air, in the dark—to laugh at a wound to one's self-love, to be only a contented mother on the day when the public should see you as a worn-out, exhausted artist."

And before this tender vision the girl's beauty took on an expression which Paul had never seen in it before, an expression which gripped his whole being, and gave him a mad longing to carry off in his arms that beautiful wild bird, dreaming of the home-cote, to protect and shelter it in the sure love of an honest man.

She, without looking at him, continued:

"I am not so erratic as I appear; don't think it. Ask my good godmother if, when she sent me to boarding-school, I did not observe the rules. But what a muddle in my life afterward. If you knew what sort of an early youth I had; how precocious an experience tarnished my mind, in the head of the little girl I was, what a confusion of the permitted and the forbidden, of reason and folly! Art alone, extolled and discussed, stood out boldly from among it all, and I took refuge in it. That is perhaps why I shall never be anything but an artist, a woman apart from others, a poor Amazon with heart imprisoned in her iron cuirass, launched into the conflict like a man, and as a man condemned to live and die."

Why did he not say to her, at this:

"Beauteous lady-warrior, lay down your arms, resume the flowing robe and the graces of the woman's sphere. I love you! Marry me, I implore you, and win happiness both for yourself and me."

Ah, there it is! He was afraid lest the other—you know him, the man who was to have come to dinner that evening and who remained between them despite his absence—should hear him speak thus and be in a position to jest at or to pity him for that fine outburst.

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"In any case, I firmly swear one thing," she resumed, "and it is that if ever I have a daughter, I will try to make a true woman of her, and not a poor lonely creature like myself. Oh! you know, my fairy, it is not for you that I say that. You have always been kind to your demon, full of attentions and tenderness. But just see how pretty she is, how young she looks this evening."

Animated by the meal, the bright lights, one of those white dresses the reflection from which effaces wrinkles, the Crenmitz, leaning back in her chair, held up on a level with her half-closed eyes a glass of Château-Yquem, come from the cellar of the neighbouring Moulin-Rouge; and her dainty little rosy face, her flowing garments, like those you might see in some pastel, reflected in the golden wine, which lent to them its own piquant fervour, recalled to mind the quondam heroine of gay little suppers after the theatre, the Crenmitz of the brave old days—not an audacious creature after the manner of the stars of our modern opera, but unconscious, and wrapped in her luxury like a fine pearl in the delicate whiteness of its shell. Félicia, who decidedly that evening was anxious to please everybody, turned her mind gently to the chapter of recollections; got her to recount once more her great triumphs in *Gisella,* in the *Peri,* and the ovations of the public; the visit of the princes to her dressing-room; the present of Queen Amelia, accompanied by such a charming little speech. The recalling of these glories intoxicated the poor fairy; her eyes shone; they heard her little feet moving impatiently under the table as though seized by a dancing frenzy. And in effect, dinner over, when they had returned to the studio, Constance began to walk backward and forward, now and then half executing a step, a pirouette, while continuing to talk, interrupting herself to hum some ballad air of which she would keep the rhythm with a movement of the head; then suddenly she bent herself double, and with a bound was at the other end of the studio.

"Now she is off!" said Félicia in a low voice to de Géry. "Watch! It is worth your while; you are going to see the Crenmitz dance."

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A Day of Spleen

It was charming and fairy-like. Against the background of the immense room lost in shadow and receiving almost no light save through the arched glass roof over which the moon was climbing in a pale sky of night blue, a veritable sky of the opera, the silhouette of the famous dancer stood out all white, like a droll little shadow, light and imponderable, which seemed rather to be flying in the air than springing over the floor; then, erect upon the tips of her toes, supported in the air only by her extended arms, her face lifted in an elusive pose which left nothing visible but the smile, she advanced quickly towards the light or fled away with little rushes so rapid that you were constantly expecting to hear a slight shivering of glass and to see her thus mount backward the slope of the great moonbeam that lay aslant the studio. That which added a charm, a singular poetry, to this fantastic ballet was the absence of music, the sound alone of the rhythmical beat the force of which was accentuated by the semi-darkness, of that quick and light tapping not heavier on the parquet floor than the fall, petal by petal, of a dahlia going out of bloom.

Thus it went on for some minutes, at the end of which they knew, by hearing her shorter breathing, that she was becoming fatigued.

"Enough! enough! Sit down now," said Félicia. Thereupon the little white shadow halted beside an easy chair, and there remained posed, ready to start off again, smiling and breathless, until sleep overcame her, rocking and balancing her gently without disturbing her pretty pose, as of a dragon-fly on the branch of a willow dipping in the water and swayed by the current.

While they watched her, dozing on her easy chair,

"Poor little fairy!" said Félicia, "hers is what I have had best and most serious in my life in the way of friendship, protection, and guardianship. It is this butterfly that has been my godmother. Can you wonder now at the zigzags, the erratic nature of my mind? Fortunate at that, to have gone no further."

And suddenly, with a joyous effusion of feeling:

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worth more than all the rest of womankind together. And yet, failing her—failing her——"

And the beautiful sphinx, tamed, raised to him, moist and laughing, her great eyes, in which the enigma had ceased to be indecipherable.

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XIV

THE EXHIBITION

"SUPERB!"

"A tremendous success! Barye has never done anything so good before."

"And the bust of the Nabob! What a marvel. How happy Constance Crenmitz is! Look at her trotting about!"

"What! That little old lady in the ermine cape is the Crenmitz? I thought she had been dead twenty years ago."

Oh, no! Very much alive, on the contrary. Delighted, made young again by the triumph of her goddaughter, who has made what is decidedly the success of the exhibition, she passes about among the crowd of artists and fashionable people, who, wedged together and stifling themselves in order to get a look at the two points where the works sent by Félicia are exhibited, form as it were two solid masses of black backs and jumbled dresses. Constance, ordinarily so timid, edges her way into the front rank, listens to the discussions, catches, as they fly disjointed phrases, formulas which she takes care to remember, approves with a nod, smiles, raises her shoulders when she hears a stupid remark made, inclined to murder the first person who should not admire.

Whether it be the good Crenmitz or another, you will always see it at every opening of the *Salon*, that furtive silhouette, prowling near wherever a conversation is going on, with an anxious manner and alert ear; sometimes a simple old fellow, some father, whose glance thanks you for any kind word said in passing, or assumes a grieved expression by reason of some epigram, flung at the work of art, that may wound some heart behind you. A figure not to be forgotten, certainly, if ever it should occur to any

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painter with a passion for modernity to fix on canvas that very typical manifestation of Parisian life, the opening of an exhibition in that vast conservatory of sculpture, with its paths of yellow sand, and its immense glass roof beneath which, half-way up, stand out the galleries of the first floor, lined by heads bent over to look down, and decorated with improvised flowing draperies.

In a rather cold light, made pallid by those green curtains that hang all around, in which one would fancy that the light-rays became rarefied, in order to give to the vision of the people walking about the room a certain contemplative justice, the slow crowd goes and comes, pauses, disperses itself over the seats in serried groups, and yet mixing up different sections of society more thoroughly than any other assembly, just as the weather, uncertain and changeable at this time of the year, produces a confusion in the world of clothes, causes to brush each other as they pass, the black laces, the imperious train of the great lady come to see how her portrait looks, and the Siberian furs of the actress just back from Russia and anxious that everybody should know it.

Here, no boxes, no stalls, no reserved seats, and it is this that gives to this *première* in full daylight so great a charm of curiosity. Genuine ladies of fashion are able to form an opinion of those painted beauties who receive so much commendation in an artificial light; the little hat, following a new mode of the Marquise de Bois l'Héry, confronts the more than modest toilette of some artist's wife or daughter; while the model who posed for that beautiful Andromeda at the entrance, goes by victoriously, clad in too short a skirt, in wretched garments that hide her beauty beneath all the false lines of fashion. People observe, admire, criticise each other, exchange glances contemptuous, disdainful, or curious, interrupted suddenly at the passage of a celebrity, of that illustrious critic whom we seem still to see, tranquil and majestic, his powerful head framed in its long hair, making the round of the exhibits in sculpture followed by a dozen young disciples eager to hear the verdict of his kindly authority. If the sound of voices is lost

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beneath that immense dome, sonorous only under the two vaults of the entrance and the exit, faces take on there an astonishing intensity, a relief of movement and animation concentrated especially in the huge, dark bay where refreshments are served, crowded to overflowing and full of gesticulation, the brightly coloured hats of the women and the white aprons of the waiters gleaming against the background of dark clothes, and in the great space in the middle where the oval swarming with visitors makes a singular contrast with the immobility of the exhibited statues, producing the insensible palpitation with which their marble whiteness and their movements as of apotheosis are surrounded.

There are wings poised in giant flight, a sphere supported by four allegorical figures whose attitude of turning suggests some vague waltz-measure—a total effect of equilibrium well conveying the illusion of the sweeping onward of the earth; and there are arms raised to give a signal, bodies heroically risen, containing an allegory, a symbol which stamps them with death and immortality, secures to them a place in history, in legend, in that ideal world of museums which is visited by the curiosity or the admiration of the nations.

Although Félicia's group in bronze had not the proportions of these large pieces, its exceptional merit had caused it to be selected to adorn one of the open spaces in the middle, from which at this moment the public was holding itself at a respectful distance, watching, over the hedge of custodians and policemen, the Bey of Tunis and his suite, an array of long bernouses falling in sculptural folds, which had the effect of placing living statues opposite the other ones.

The Bey, who had been in Paris since a few days before, and was the lion of all the *premières,* had desired to see the opening of the exhibition. He was " an enlightened prince, a friend of art," who possessed at the Bardo a gallery of remarkable Turkish paintings and chromo-lithographic reproductions of all the battles of the First Empire. The moment he entered, the sight of the big Arab greyhound had struck him as he passed. It was the *sleughi*

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all over, the true *sleughi,* delicate and nervous, of his own country, the companion of all his hunting expeditions. He laughed in his black beard, felt the loins of the animal, stroked its muscles, seemed to want to urge it on still faster, while with nostrils open, teeth showing, all its limbs stretched out and unwearying in their vigorous elasticity, the aristocratic beast, the beast of prey, ardent in love and the chase, intoxicated with their double intoxication, its eyes fixed, was already enjoying a foretaste of its capture with a little end of its tongue which hung and seemed to sharpen the teeth with a ferocious laugh. When you only looked at the hound you said to yourself, "He has got him!" But the sight of the fox reassured you immediately. Beneath the velvet of his lustrous coat, cat-like almost lying along the ground, covering it rapidly without effort, you felt him to be a veritable fairy; and his delicate head with its pointed ears, which as he ran he turned towards the hound, had an expression of ironical security which clearly marked the gift received from the gods.

While an Inspector of Fine Arts, who had rushed up in all haste, with his official dress in disorder, and a head bald right down to his back, explained to Mohammed the apologue of "The Dog and the Fox," related in the descriptive catalogue with these words inscribed beneath, "Now it happened that they met," and the indication, "The property of the Duc de Mora," the fat Hemerlingue, perspiring and puffing by his Highness's side, had great difficulty to convince him that this masterly piece of sculpture was the work of the beautiful lady whom they had encountered the previous evening riding in the Bois. How could a woman, with her feeble hands, thus mould the hard bronze, and give to it the very appearance of the living body? Of all the marvels of Paris, this was the one which caused the Bey the most astonishment. He inquired consequently from the functionary if there was nothing else to see by the same artist.

"Yes, indeed, monseigneur, another masterpiece. If your Highness will deign to step this way I will conduct you to it."

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The Bey commenced to move on again with his suite. They were all admirable types, with chiselled features and pure lines, warm pallors of complexion of which even the reflections were absorbed by the whiteness of their *haiks*. Magnificently draped, they contrasted with the busts ranged on either side of the aisle they were following, which, perched on their high columns, looking slender in the open air, exiled from their own home, from the surroundings in which doubtless they would have recalled severe labours, a tender affection, a busy and courageous existence, had the sad aspect of people gone astray from their path, and very regretful to find themselves in their present situation. Excepting two or three female heads, with opulent shoulders framed in petrified lace, and hair rendered in marble with that softness of touch which gives it the lightness of a powdered wig, excepting, too, a few profiles of children with their simple lines, in which the polish of the stone seems to resemble the moistness of the living flesh, all the rest were only wrinkles, crow's-feet, shrivelled features and grimaces, our excesses in work and in movement, our nervousness and our feverishness, opposing themselves to that art of repose and of beautiful serenity.

The ugliness of the Nabob had at least energy in its favour, the vulgar side of him as an adventurer, and that expression of benevolence, so well rendered by the artist, who had taken care to underlay her plaster with a layer of ochre, which gave it almost the weather-beaten and sunburned tone of the model. The Arabs, when they saw it, uttered a stifled exclamation, "Bou-Saïd!" (the father of good fortune). This was the surname of the Nabob in Tunis, the label, as it were, of his luck. The Bey, for his part, thinking that some one had wished to play a trick on him in thus leading him to inspect the bust of the hated trader, regarded his guide with mistrust.

"Jansoulet?" said he in his guttural voice.

"Yes, Highness: Bernard Jansoulet, the new deputy for Corsica."

This time the Bey turned to Hemerlingue, with a frown on his brow.

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"Deputy?"

"Yes, monseigneur, since this morning; but nothing is yet settled."

And the banker, raising his voice, added with a stutter:

"No French Chamber will ever admit that adventurer."

No matter. The stroke had fallen on the blind faith of the Bey in his baron financier. The latter had so confidently affirmed to him that the other would never be elected and that their action with regard to him need not be fettered or in any way hampered by the least fear. And now, instead of a man ruined and overthrown, there rose before him a representative of the nation, a deputy whose portrait in stone the Parisians were coming to admire; for in the eyes of the Oriental, an idea of distinction being mingled in spite of everything with this public exhibition, that bust had the prestige of a statue dominating a square. Still more yellow than usual, Hemerlingue internally accused himself of clumsiness and imprudence. But how could he ever have dreamed of such a thing? He had been assured that the bust was not finished. And in fact it had been there only since morning, and seemed quite at home, quivering with satisfied pride, defying its enemies with the good-tempered smile of its curling lip. A veritable silent revenge for the disaster of Saint-Romans.

For some minutes the Bey, cold and impassible as the sculptured image, gazed at it without saying anything, his forehead divided by a straight crease wherein his courtiers alone could read his anger; then, after two quick words in Arabic, to order the carriages and to reassemble his scattered suite, he directed his steps gravely towards the door of exit, without consenting to give even a glance to anything else. Who shall say what passes in these august brains surfeited with power? Even our sovereigns of the West have incomprehensible fantasies; but they are nothing compared with Oriental caprices. Monsieur the Inspector of Fine Arts, who had made sure of taking his Highness all round the exhibition and of thus winning the pretty red-and-green ribbon of the Nicham-Iftikahr, never knew the secret of this sudden flight.

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The Exhibition

At the moment when the white *haiks* were disappearing under the porch, just in time to see the last wave of their folds, the Nabob made his entry by the middle door. In the morning he had received the news, "Elected by an overwhelming majority"; and after a sumptuous luncheon, at which the new deputy for Corsica had been extensively toasted, he came, with some of his guests, to show himself, to see himself also, to enjoy all his new glory.

The first person whom he saw as he arrived was Félicia Ruys, standing, leaning on the pedestal of a statue, surrounded by compliments and tributes of admiration, to which he made haste to add his own. She was simply dressed, clad in a black costume embroidered and trimmed with jet, tempering the severity of her attire with a glittering of reflected lights, and with a delightful little hat all made of downy plumes, the play of colour in which her hair, curled delicately on her forehead and drawn back to the neck in great waves, seemed to continue and to soften.

A crowd of artists and fashionable people were assiduous in their attentions to so great a genius allied to so much beauty; and Jenkins, bareheaded, and puffing with warm effusiveness, was going from one to the other, stimulating their enthusiasm but widening the circle around this young fame of which he constituted himself at once the guardian and the trumpeter. His wife during this time was talking with the young girl. Poor Mme. Jenkins! She had heard that savage voice, which she alone knew, say to her, "You must go and greet Félicia." And she had gone to do so, controlling her emotion; for she knew now what it was that hid itself at the bottom of that paternal affection, although she avoided all discussion of it with the doctor, as if she had been fearful of the issue.

After Mme. Jenkins, it is the turn of the Nabob to rush up, and taking the artist's two long, delicately-gloved hands between his fat paws, he expresses his gratitude with a cordiality which brings the tears to his own eyes.

"It is a great honour that you have done me, mademoiselle, to associate my name with yours, my humble person with your triumph, and to prove to all this vermin gnawing

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at my heels that you do not believe the calumnies which have been spread with regard to me. Yes, truly, I shall never forget it. In vain I may cover this magnificent bust with gold and diamonds, I shall still be your debtor."

Fortunately for the good Nabob, with more feeling than eloquence, he is obliged to make way for all the others attracted by a dazzling talent, the personality in view; extravagant enthusiasms which, for want of words to express themselves, disappear as they come; the conventional admirations of society, moved by good-will, by a lively desire to please, but of which each word is a douche of cold water; and then the hearty hand-shakes of rivals, of comrades, some very frank, others that communicate to you the weakness of their grasp; the pretentious great booby, at whose idiotic eulogy you must appear to be transported with gladness, and who, lest he should spoil you too much, accompanies it with "a few little reserves," and the other, who, while overwhelming you with compliments, demonstrates to you that you have not learned the first word of your profession; and the excellent busy fellow, who stops just long enough to whisper in your ear "that so-and-so, the famous critic, does not look very pleased." Félicia listened to it all with the greatest calm, raised by her success above the littleness of envy, and quite proud when a glorious veteran, some old comrade of her father, threw to her a "You've done very well, little one!" which took her back to the past, to the little corner reserved for her in the old days in her father's studio, when she was beginning to carve out a little glory for herself under the protection of the renown of the great Ruys. But, taken altogether, the congratulations left her rather cold, because there lacked one which she desired more than any other, and which she was surprised not to have yet received. Decidedly he was more often in her thoughts than any other man had ever been. Was it love at last, the great love which is so rare in an artist's soul, incapable as that is of giving itself entirely up to the sway of sentiment, or was it perhaps simply a dream of honest *bourgeoise* life, well sheltered against *ennui*, that spiritless *ennui*, the precursor of storms, which she had so much

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reason to dread? In any case, she was herself taken in by it, and had been living for some days past in a state of delicious trouble, for love is so strong, so beautiful a thing, that its semblances, its mirages, allure and can move us as deeply as itself.

Has it ever happened to you in the street, when you have been preoccupied with thoughts of some one dear to you, to be warned of his approach by meeting persons with a vague resemblance to him, preparatory images, sketches of the type to appear directly afterward, which stand out for you from the crowd like successive appeals to your over-excited attention? Such presentiments are magnetic and nervous impressions at which one should not be too disposed to smile, since they constitute a faculty of suffering. Already, in the moving and constantly renewed stream of visitors, Félicia had several times thought to recognise the curly head of Paul de Géry, when suddenly she uttered a cry of joy. It was not he, however, this time again, but some one who resembled him closely, whose regular and peaceful physiognomy was always now connected in her mind with that of her friend Paul through the effect of a likeness more moral than physical, and the gentle authority which both exercised over her thoughts.

"Aline!"

"Félicia!"

If nothing is more open to suspicion than the friendship of two fashionable ladies sharing the prerogatives of drawing-room royalty and lavishing on each other flattering epithets, and the trivial graces of feminine fondness, the friendships of childhood keep in the grown woman a frankness of manner which distinguishes them, and makes them recognisable among all others, bonds woven naïvely and firm as the needlework of little girls in which an inexperienced hand has been prodigal of thread and big knots; plants reared in fresh soil, in flower, but with strong roots, full of vitality and new shoots. And what a joy, hand in hand—you glad dances of boarding-school days, where are you?—to retrace some steps of one's way with somebody who has an equal acquaintance with it and its least incidents, and the same

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laugh of tender retrospection. A little apart, the two girls, for whom it has been sufficient to find themselves once more face to face to forget five years of separation, carry on a rapid exchange of recollections, while the little *père* Joyeuse, his ruddy face brightened by a new cravat, straightens himself in pride to see his daughter thus warmly welcomed by such an illustrious person. Proud certainly he has reason to be, for the little Parisian, even in the neighbourhood of her brilliant friend, holds her own in grace, youth, fair candour, beneath her twenty smooth and golden years, which the gladness of this meeting brings to fresh bloom.

"How happy you must be! For my part, I have seen nothing yet; but I hear everybody saying it is so beautiful."

"Happy above all to see you again, little Aline. It is so long——"

"I should think so, you naughty girl! Whose the fault?"

And from the saddest corner of her memory, Félicia recalls the date of the breaking off of their relations, coinciding for her with another date on which her youth came to its end in an unforgettable scene.

"And what have you been doing, darling, all this time?"

"Oh, I, always the same thing—or, nothing to speak of."

"Yes, yes, we know what you call doing nothing, you brave little thing! Giving your life to other people, isn't it?"

But Aline was no longer listening. She was smiling affectionately to some one straight in front of her; and Félicia, turning round to see who it was, perceived Paul de Géry replying to the shy and tender greeting of Mlle. Joyeuse.

"You know each other, then?"

"Do I know M. Paul! I should think so, indeed. We talk of you very often. He has never told you, then?"

"Never. He must be a terribly sly fellow."

She stopped short, her mind enlightened by a flash; and

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quickly, without heed to de Géry, who was coming up to congratulate her on her triumph, she leaned over towards Aline and spoke to her in a low voice. That young lady blushed, protested with smiles and words under her breath: "How can you think of such a thing? At my age—a 'grandmamma'!" and finally seized her father's arm in order to escape some friendly teasing.

When Félicia saw the two young people going off together, when she had realized the fact, which they had not yet grasped themselves, that they were in love with each other, she felt as it were a crumbling all around her. Then upon her dream, now fallen to the ground in a thousand fragments, she set herself to stamp furiously. After all, he was quite right to prefer this little Aline to herself. Would an honest man ever dare to marry Mlle. Ruys? She, a home, a family—what nonsense! A harlot's daughter you are, my dear; you must be a harlot too if you want to become anything at all.

The day wore on. The crowd, more active now that there were empty spaces here and there, commenced to stream towards the door of exit after great eddyings round the successes of the year, satisfied, rather tired, but excited still by that air charged with the electricity of art. A great flood of sunlight, such as sometimes occurs at four o'clock in the afternoon, fell on the stained-glass rose-window, threw on the sand tracks of rainbow-coloured lights, softly bathing the bronze or the marble of the statues, imparting an iridescent hue to the nudity of a beautiful figure, giving to the vast museum something of the luminous life of a garden. Félicia, absorbed in her deep and sad reverie, did not notice the man who advanced towards her, superb, elegant, fascinating, through the respectfully opened ranks of the public, while the name of "Mora" was everywhere whispered.

"Well, mademoiselle, you have made a splendid success. I only regret one thing about it, and that is the cruel symbol which you have hidden in your masterpiece."

As she saw the duke before her, she shuddered.

"Ah, yes, the symbol," she said, lifting her face towards

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his with a smile of discouragement; and leaning against the pedestal of the large, voluptuous statue near which they happened to be standing, with the closed eyes of a woman who gives or abandons herself, she murmured low, very low:

"Rabelais lied, as all men lie. The truth is that the fox is utterly wearied, that he is at the end of his breath and his courage, ready to fall into the ditch, and that if the greyhound make another effort——"

Mora started, became a shade paler, all the blood he had in his body rushing back to his heart. Two sombre flames met with their eyes, two rapid words were exchanged by lips that hardly moved; then the duke bowed profoundly, and walked away with a step gay and light, as though the gods were bearing him.

At that moment there was in the palace only one man as happy as he, and that was the Nabob. Escorted by his friends, he occupied, quite filled up, the principal bay with his own party alone, speaking loudly, gesticulating, proud to such a degree that he looked almost handsome, as though by dint of naïve and long contemplation of his bust he had been touched by something of the splendid idealization with which the artist had haloed the vulgarity of his type. The head, raised to the three-quarters position, standing freely out from the wide, loose collar, drew contradictory remarks on the resemblance from the passers-by; and the name of Jansoulet, so many times repeated by the electoral ballot-boxes, was repeated over again now by the prettiest mouths, by the most authoritative voices, in Paris. Any other than the Nabob would have been embarrassed to hear uttered, as he passed, these expressions of curiosity which were not always friendly. But the platform, the springing-board, well suited that nature which became bolder under the fire of glances, like those women who are beautiful or witty only in society, and whom the least admiration transfigures and completes.

When he felt this delirious joy growing calmer, when he thought to have drunk the whole of its proud intoxication, he had only to say to himself, "Deputy! I am a

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Deputy!" And the triumphal cup foamed once more to the brim. It meant the embargo raised from all his possessions, the awakening from a nightmare that had lasted two months, the puff of cool wind sweeping away all his anxieties, all his inquietudes, even to the affront of Saint-Romans, very heavy though that was in his memory.

Deputy!

He laughed to himself as he thought of the baron's face when he learned the news, of the stupefaction of the Bey when he had been led up to his bust; and suddenly, upon the reflection that he was no longer merely an adventurer stuffed with gold, exciting the stupid admiration of the crowd, as might an enormous rough nugget in the window of a money-changer, but that people saw in him, as he passed, one of the men elected by the will of the nation, his simple and mobile face grew thoughtful with a deliberate gravity, there suggested themselves to him projects of a career, of reform, and the wish to profit by the lessons that had been latterly taught by destiny. Already, remembering the promise which he had given to de Géry, for the household troop that wriggled ignobly at his heels, he made exhibition of certain disdainful coldnesses, a deliberate pose of authoritative contradiction. He called the Marquis de Bois l'Héry "my good fellow," imposed silence very sharply on the governor, whose enthusiasm was becoming scandalous, and made a solemn vow to himself to get rid as soon as possible of all that mendicant and compromising Bohemian set, when he should have a good occasion to begin the process.

Penetrating the crowd which surrounded him, Moëssard —the handsome Moëssard, in a sky-blue cravat, pale and bloated like a white embodiment of disease, and pinched at the waist in a fine frock-coat—seeing that the Nabob, after having gone twenty times round the hall of sculpture, was making for the door, dashed forward, and passing his arm through his, said:

"You are taking me with you, you know."

Especially of late, since the time of the election, he had assumed, in the establishment of the Place Vendôme, an

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authority almost equal to that of Monpavon, but more impudent; for, in point of impudence, the Queen's lover was without his equal on the pavement that stretches from the Rue Drouot to the Madeleine. This time he had gone too far. The muscular arm which he pressed was shaken violently, and the Nabob answered very dryly:

"I am sorry, *mon cher,* but I have not a place to offer you."

No place in a carriage that was as big as a house, and which five of them had come in!

Moëssard gazed at him in stupefaction.

"I had, however, a few words to say to you which are very urgent. With regard to the subject of my note—you received it, did you not?"

"Certainly; and M. de Géry should have sent you a reply this very morning. What you ask is impossible. Twenty thousand francs! *Tonnerre de Dieu!* You go at a fine rate!"

"Still, it seems to me that my services—" stammered the beauty-man.

"Have been amply paid for. That is how it seems to me also. Two hundred thousand francs in five months! We will draw the line there, if you please. Your teeth are long, young man; you will have to file them down a little."

They exchanged these words as they walked, pushed forward by the surging wave of the people going out. Moëssard stopped:

"That is your last word?"

The Nabob hesitated for a moment, seized by a presentiment as he looked at that pale, evil mouth; then he remembered the promise which he had given to his friend:

"That is my last word."

"Very well! We shall see," said the handsome Moëssard, whose switch-cane cut the air with the hiss of a viper; and, turning on his heel, he made off with great strides, like a man who is expected somewhere on very urgent business.

Jansoulet continued his triumphal progress. That day much more would have been required to upset the equi-

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librium of his happiness; on the contrary, he felt himself relieved by the so-quickly achieved fulfilment of his purpose.

The immense vestibule was thronged by a dense crowd of people whom the approach of the hour of closing was bringing out, but whom one of those sudden showers, which seem inseparable from the opening of the *Salon,* kept waiting beneath the porch, with its floor beaten down and sandy like the entrance to the circus where the young dandies strut about. The scene that met the eye was curious, and very Parisian.

Outside, great rays of sunshine traversing the rain, attaching to its limpid beads those sharp and brilliant blades which justify the proverbial saying, "It rains halberds"; the young greenery of the Champs-Elysées, the clumps of rhododendrons, rustling and wet, the carriages ranged in the avenue, the mackintosh capes of the coachmen, all the splendid harness-trappings of the horses receiving from the rain and the sunbeams an added richness and effect, and blue everywhere looming out, the blue of a sky which is about to smile in the interval between two downpours.

Within, laughter, gossip, greetings, impatience, skirts held up, satins bulging out above the delicate folds of petticoats and the soft stripes of silk stockings, waves of frills, of lace, of flounces gathered up in the hands of their wearers in heavy, terribly frayed bundles. Then, to unite the two sides of the picture, these prisoners framed in by the vaulted ceiling of the porch and in the gloom of its shadow, with the immense background in brilliant light, footmen running beneath umbrellas, crying out names of coachmen or of masters, broughams coming up at walking pace, and flustered couples getting into them.

"M. Jansoulet's carriage!"

Everybody turned round, but, as one knows, that did not embarrass him. And while the good Nabob, waiting for his suite, stood posing a little amid these fashionable and famous people, this mixed *tout Paris* which was there, with its every face bearing a well-known name, a nervous and well-gloved hand was stretched out to him, and the Duc de Mora, on his way to his brougham, threw to him,

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as he passed, these words, with that effusion which happiness gives to the most reserved of men:

"My congratulations, my dear deputy."

It was said in a loud voice, and every one could hear it: "My dear deputy."

There is in the life of all men one golden hour, one luminous peak, whereon all that they can hope of prosperity, joy, triumph, waits for them and is given into their hands. The summit is more or less lofty, more or less rugged and difficult to climb, but it exists equally for all, for powerful and for humble alike. Only, like that longest day of the year on which the sun has shone with its utmost brilliance, and of which the morrow seems a first step towards winter, this *summum* of human existences is but a moment given to be enjoyed, after which one can but redescend. This late afternoon of the first of May, streaked with rain and sunshine, thou must forget it not, poor man—must fix forever its changing brilliance in thy memory. It was the hour of thy full summer, with its flowers in bloom, its fruits bending their golden boughs, its ripe harvests of which so recklessly thou wast plucking the corn. The star will now pale, gradually growing more remote and falling, incapable ere long of piercing the mournful night wherein thy destiny shall be accomplished.

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XV

MEMOIRS OF AN OFFICE PORTER—IN THE ANTECHAMBER

GREAT festivities last Saturday in the Place Vendôme. In honour of his election, M. Bernard Jansoulet, the new deputy for Corsica, gave a magnificent evening party, with municipal guards at the door, illumination of the entire mansion, and two thousand invitations sent out to fashionable Paris.

I owed to the distinction of my manners, to the sonority of my vocal organ, which the chairman of the board had had occasion to notice at the meetings at the Territorial Bank, the opportunity of taking part in this sumptuous entertainment, at which, for three hours, standing in the vestibule, amid the flowers and hangings, clad in scarlet and gold, with that majesty peculiar to persons who are rather generously built, and with my calves exposed for the first time in my life, I launched, like a cannon-ball, through the five communicating drawing-rooms, the name of each guest, which a glittering beadle saluted every time with the "*bing*" of his halberd on the floor.

How many the curious observations which that evening again I was able to make; how many the pleasant sallies, the high-toned jests exchanged among the servants upon all that world as it passed by! Not with the vine-dressers of Montbars in any case should I have heard such drolleries. I should remark that the worthy M. Barreau, to begin with, had caused to be served to us all in his pantry, filled to the ceiling with iced drinks and provisions, a solid lunch well washed down, which put each of us in a good humour that was maintained during the evening by the glasses of punch and champagne pilfered from the trays when dessert was served.

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The masters, indeed, seemed in less joyous mood than we. So early as nine o'clock, when I arrived at my post, I was struck by the uneasy nervousness apparent on the face of the Nabob, whom I saw walking with M. de Géry through the lighted and empty drawing-rooms, talking quickly and making large gestures.

"I will kill him!" he said; "I will kill him!"

The other endeavoured to soothe him; then madame came in, and the subject of their conversation was changed.

A mighty fine woman, this Levantine, twice as stout as I am, dazzling to look at with her tiara of diamonds, the jewels with which her huge white shoulders were laden, her back as round as her bosom, her waist compressed within a cuirass of green gold, which was continued in long braids down the whole length of her stiff skirt. I have never seen anything so imposing, so rich. She suggested one of those beautiful white elephants that carry towers on their backs, of which we read in books of travel. When she walked, supporting herself with difficulty by means of clinging to the furniture, her whole body quivered, her ornaments clattered like a lot of old iron. Added to this, a small, very piercing voice, and a fine red face which a little negro boy kept cooling for her all the time with a white feather fan as big as a peacock's tail.

It was the first time that this indolent and retiring person had showed herself to Parisian society, and M. Jansoulet seemed very happy and proud that she had been willing to preside over his party; which undertaking, for that matter, did not cost the lady much trouble, for, leaving her husband to receive the guests in the first drawing-room, she went and lay down on the divan of the small Japanese room, wedged between two piles of cushions, motionless, so that you could see her from a distance right in the background, looking like an idol, beneath the great fan which her negro waved regularly like a piece of clockwork. These foreign women possess an assurance!

All the same, the Nabob's irritation had struck me, and seeing the *valet de chambre* go by, descending the staircase

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four steps at a time, I caught him on the wing and whispered in his ear:

"What's the matter, then, with your governor, M. Noël?"

"It is the article in the *Messenger*," was his reply, and I had to give up the idea of learning anything further for the moment, the loud ringing of a bell announcing that the first carriage had arrived, followed soon by a crowd of others.

Wholly absorbed in my occupation, careful to utter clearly the names which were given to me, and to make them echo from salon to salon, I had no longer a thought for anything besides. It is no easy business to announce in a proper manner persons who are always under the impression that their name must be known, whisper it under their breath as they pass, and then are surprised to hear you murder it with the finest accent, and are almost angry with you on account of those entrances which, missing fire and greeted with little smiles, follow upon an ill-made announcement. At M. Jansoulet's, what made the work still more difficult for me was the number of foreigners—Turks, Egyptians, Persians, Tunisians. I say nothing of the Corsicans, who were very numerous that day, because during my four years at the Territorial I have become accustomed to the pronunciation of those high-sounding, interminable names, always followed by that of the locality: "Paganetti di Porto Vecchio, Bastelica di Bonifacio, Paianatchi di Barbicaglia."

It was a pleasure to me to modulate these Italian syllables, to give to them all their sonority, and I saw clearly, from the bewildered airs of these worthy islanders, how charmed and surprised they were to be introduced in such a manner into the high society of the Continent. But with the Turks, these pashas, beys, and effendis, I had much more trouble, and I must have happened often to fall on a wrong pronunciation; for M. Jansoulet, on two separate occasions, sent word to me to pay more attention to the names that were given to me, and especially to announce in a more natural manner. This remark, uttered aloud before the

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whole vestibule with a certain roughness, annoyed me greatly, and prevented me—shall I confess it?—from pitying this rich *parvenu* when I learned, in the course of the evening, what cruel thorns lay concealed in his bed of roses.

From half past ten until midnight the bell was constantly ringing, carriages rolling up under the portico, guests succeeding one another, deputies, senators, councillors of state, municipal councillors, who looked much rather as though they were attending a meeting of shareholders than an evening-party of society people. What could account for this? I had not succeeded in finding an explanation, but a remark of the beadle Nicklauss opened my eyes.

"Do you notice, M. Passajon," said that worthy henchman, as he stood opposite me, halberd in hand, "do you notice how few ladies we have?"

That was it, egad! Nor were we the only two to observe the fact. As each new arrival made his entry I could hear the Nabob, who was standing near the door, exclaim, with consternation in his thick voice like that of a Marseillais with a cold in his head:

"What! all alone?"

The guest would murmur his excuses. "Mn-mn-mn—his wife a trifle indisposed. Certainly very sorry." Then another would arrive, and the same question call forth the same reply.

By its constant repetition this phrase "All alone?" had eventually become a jest in the vestibule; lackeys and footmen threw it at each other whenever there entered a new guest "all alone!" And we laughed and were put in good-humour by it. But M. Nicklauss, with his great experience of the world, deemed this almost general abstention of the fair sex unnatural.

"It must be the article in the *Messenger*," said he.

Everybody was talking about it, this rascally article, and before the mirror garlanded with flowers, at which each guest gave a finishing touch to his attire before entering, I surprised fragments of whispered conversation such as this:

"You have read it?"

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"It is horrible!"

"Do you think the thing possible?"

"I have no idea. In any case, I preferred not to bring my wife."

"I have done the same. A man can go everywhere without compromising himself."

"Certainly. While a woman——"

Then they would go in, opera hat under arm, with that conquering air of married men when they are unaccompanied by their wives.

What, then, could there be in this newspaper, this terrible article, to menace to this degree the influence of so wealthy a man? Unfortunately, my duties took up the whole of my time. I could go down neither to the pantry nor to the cloak-room to obtain information, to chat with the coachmen and valets and lackeys whom I could see standing at the foot of the staircase, amusing themselves by jests upon the people who were going up. What will you? Masters give themselves too great airs also. How not laugh to see go by with an insolent manner and an empty stomach the Marquis and the Marquise de Bois l'Héry, after all that we have been told about the traffickings of Monsieur and the toilettes of Madame? And the Jenkins couple, so tender, so united, the doctor carefully putting a lace shawl over his lady's shoulders for fear she should take cold on the staircase; she herself smiling and in full dress, all in velvet, with a great long train, leaning on her husband's arm with an air that seems to say, "How happy I am!" when I happen to know that, in fact, since the death of the Irishwoman, his real, legitimate wife, the doctor is thinking of getting rid of the old woman who clings to him, in order to be able to marry a chit of a girl, and that the old woman passes her nights in lamentation, and in spoiling with tears whatever beauty she has left.

The humorous thing is that not one of these people had the least suspicion of the rich jests and jeers that were spat over their backs as they passed, not a notion of the filth which those long trains drew after them as they crossed the carpet of the antechamber, and they all would look at

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you so disdainfully that it was enough to make you die of laughing.

The two ladies whom I have just named, the wife of the governor, a little Corsican, to whom her bushy eyebrows, her white teeth, and her shining cheeks, dark beneath the skin, give the appearance of a woman of Auvergne with a washed face, a good sort, for the rest, and laughing all the time except when her husband is looking at other women; in addition, a few Levantines with tiaras of gold or pearls, less perfect specimens of the type than our own, but still in a similar style, wives of upholsterers, jewellers, regular tradesmen of the establishment, with shoulders as large as shop-fronts, and expensive toilettes; finally, sundry ladies, wives of officials of the Territorial, in sorry, badly creased dresses; these constituted the sole representation of the fair sex in the assembly, some thirty ladies lost among a thousand black coats—that is to say, practically none at all. From time to time Cassagne, Laporte, Grandvarlet, who were serving the refreshments in trays, stopped to inform us of what was passing in the drawing-rooms.

"Ah, my boys, if you could see it! it has a gloom, a melancholy. The men don't stir from the buffets. The ladies are all at the back, seated in a circle, fanning themselves and saying nothing. The fat old lady does not speak to a soul. I fancy she is sulking. You should see the look on Monsieur! Come, *père* Passajon, a glass of Château-Larose; it will pick you up a bit."

They were charmingly kind to me, all these young people, and took a mischievous pleasure in doing me the honours of the cellar so often and so copiously, that my tongue commenced to become heavy, uncertain, and as the young folk said to me in their somewhat free language, "Uncle, you are babbling." Happily the last of the effendis had just arrived, and there was nobody else to announce; for it was in vain that I sought to shake off the impression, every time I advanced between the curtains to send a name hurtling through the air at random, I saw the chandeliers of the drawing-rooms revolving with hundreds of dazzling lights, and the floors slipping away with sharp and perpen-

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dicular slopes like Russian mountains. I was bound to get my speech mixed, it is certain.

The cool night-air, sundry ablutions at the pump in the court-yard, quickly got the better of this small discomfort, and when I entered the cloak-room nothing of it was any longer apparent. I found a numerous and gay company collected round a *marquise au champagne,* of which all my nieces, wearing their best dresses, with their hair puffed out and cravats of pink ribbon, took their full share notwithstanding exclamations and bewitching little grimaces that deceived nobody. Naturally, the conversation turned on the famous article, an article by Moëssard, it appears, full of frightful revelations with regard to all kinds of dishonouring occupations which the Nabob was alleged to have followed fifteen or twenty years ago, at the time of his first sojourn in Paris.

It was the third attack of the kind which the *Messenger* had published in the course of the last week, and that rogue of a Moëssard had the spite to send the number each time done up in a packet to the Place Vendôme.

M. Jansoulet received it in the morning with his chocolate; and at the same hour his friends and his enemies—for a man like the Nabob could be regarded with indifference by none—would be reading, commenting, tracing for themselves in relation to him a line of conduct designed to save them from becoming compromised. To-day's article must be supposed to have struck hard all the same; for Jansoulet, the coachman, recounted to us that a few hours ago, in the Bois, his master had not exchanged ten greetings in the course of ten drives round the lake, while ordinarily his hat is as rarely on his head as a sovereign's when he takes the air. Then, when they got back, there was another trouble. The three boys had just arrived at the house, all in tears and dismay, brought home from the College Bourdaloue by a worthy father in the interest of the poor little fellows themselves, who had received a temporary leave of absence in order to spare them from hearing in the parlour or the playground any unkind story or painful allusion. Thereupon the Nabob flew into a terrible passion, which

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caused him to destroy a service of porcelain, and it appears that, had it not been for M. de Géry, he would have rushed off at once to punch Moëssard's head.

"And he would have done well," remarked M. Noël, entering at these last words, very much excited. "There is not a line of truth in that rascal's article. My master had never been in Paris before last year. From Tunis to Marseilles, from Marseilles to Tunis, those were his only journeys. But this knave of a journalist is taking his revenge because we refused him twenty thousand francs."

"There you acted very unwisely," observed M. Francis upon this—Monpavon's Francis, Monpavon the old beau whose solitary tooth shakes about in the centre of his mouth at every word he says, but whom the young ladies regard with a favourable eye all the same on account of his fine manners. "Yes, you were unwise. One must know how to conciliate people, so long as they are in a position to be useful to us or to injure us. Your Nabob has turned his back too quickly upon his friends after his success; and between you and me, *mon cher,* he is not sufficiently firmly established to be able to disregard attacks of this kind."

I thought myself able here to put in a word in my turn:

"That is true enough, M. Noël, your governor is no longer the same since his election. He has adopted a tone and manners which I can hardly but describe as reprehensible. The day before yesterday, at the Territorial, he raised a commotion which you can hardly imagine. He was heard to exclaim before the whole board: 'You have lied to me; you have robbed me, and made me a robber as much as yourselves. Show me your books, you set of rogues!' If he has treated Moëssard in the same sort of fashion, I am not surprised any longer that the latter should be taking his revenge in his newspaper."

"But what does this article say?" asked M. Barreau. "Who is present that has read it?"

Nobody answered. Several had tried to buy it, but in Paris scandal sells like bread. At ten o'clock in the morning there was not a single copy of the *Messenger* left in the office. Then it occurred to one of my nieces—a sharp girl,

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if ever there was one—to look in the pocket of one of the numerous overcoats in the cloak-room, folded carefully in large pigeon-holes. At the first which she examined:

"Here it is!" exclaimed the charming child with an air of triumph, as she drew out a *Messenger* crumpled in the folding like a paper that has just been read.

"Here is another!" cried Tom Bois l'Héry, who was making a search on his own account. A third overcoat, a third *Messenger*. And in every one the same thing: pushed down to the bottom of a pocket, or with its title-page protruding, the newspaper was everywhere, just as its article must have been in every memory; and one could imagine the Nabob up above exchanging polite phrases with his guests, while they could have reeled off by heart the atrocious things that had been printed about him. We all laughed much at this idea; but we were anxious to make acquaintance in our own turn with this curious article.

"Come, *père* Passajon, read it aloud to us."

It was the general desire, and I assented.

I don't know if you are like me, but when I read aloud I gargle my throat with my voice; I introduce modulations and flourishes to such an extent that I understand nothing of what I am saying, like those singers to whom the sense of the words matters little, provided the notes be true. The thing was entitled "The Boat of Flowers"—a sufficiently complicated story, with Chinese names, about a very rich mandarin, who had at one time in the past kept a "boat of flowers" moored quite at the far end of the town near a barrier frequented by the soldiers. At the end of the article we were no farther on than at the beginning. We tried certainly to wink at each other, to pretend to be clever; but, frankly, we had no reason. A veritable puzzle without solution; and we should still be stuck fast at it if old Francis, a regular rascal who knows everything, had not explained to us that this meeting place of the soldiers must stand for the Military School, and that the "boat of flowers" did not bear so pretty a name as that in good French. And this name, he said it aloud notwithstanding the presence of the ladies. There was an explosion of cries, of "Ah's!" and

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"Oh's!" some saying, "I suspected it!" others, "It is impossible!"

"Pardon me," added Francis, formerly a trumpeter in the Ninth Lancers—the regiment of Mora and of Monpavon—"pardon me. Twenty years ago, during the last half year of my service, I was in barracks in the Military School, and I remember very well that near the fortifications there was a dirty dancing-hall known as the Jansoulet Rooms, with a little furnished flat above and bedrooms at twopence-halfpenny the hour, to which one could retire between two quadrilles."

"You are an infamous liar!" said M. Noël, beside himself with rage—"a thief and a liar like your master. Jansoulet has never been in Paris before now."

Francis was seated a little outside our circle engaged in sipping something sweet, because champagne has a bad effect on his nerves and because, too, it is not a sufficiently distinguished beverage for him. He rose gravely, without putting down his glass, and, advancing towards M. Noël, said to him very quietly:

"You are wanting in manners, *mon cher*. The other evening I found your tone coarse and unseemly. To insult people serves no good purpose, especially in this case, since I happen to have been an assistant to a fencing-master, and, if matters were carried further between us, could put a couple of inches of steel into whatever part of your body I might choose. But I am good-natured. Instead of a sword-thrust, I prefer to give you a piece of advice, which your master will do well to follow. This is what I should do in your place: I should go and find Moëssard, and I should buy him, without quibbling about price. Hemerlingue has given him twenty thousand francs to speak; I would offer him thirty thousand to hold his tongue."

"Never! never!" vociferated M. Noël. "I should rather go and knock the rascally brigand's head off."

"You will do nothing of the kind. Whether the calumny be true or false, you have seen the effect of it this evening. This is a sample of the pleasures in store for you. What can you expect, *mon cher*? You have thrown away

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your crutches too soon, and thought to walk by yourselves. That is all very well when one is well set up and firm on the legs; but when one has not a very solid footing, and has also the misfortune to feel Hemerlingue at his heels, it is a bad business. Besides, your master is beginning to be short of money; he has given notes of hand to old Schwalbach—and don't talk to me of a Nabob who gives notes of hand. I know well that you have millions over yonder, but your election must be declared valid before you can touch them; a few more articles like to-day's, and I answer for it that you will not secure that declaration. You set yourselves up to struggle against Paris, *mon bon*, but you are not big enough for such a match; you know nothing about it. Here we are not in the East, and if we do not wring the necks of people who displease us, if we do not throw them into the water in a sack, we have other methods of effecting their disappearance. Noël, let your master take care. One of these mornings Paris will swallow him as I swallow this plum, without spitting out either stone or skin."

He was terrible, this old man, and notwithstanding the paint on his face, I felt a certain respect for him. While he was speaking, we could hear the music upstairs, and the horses of the municipal guards shaking their curb-chains in the square. From without, our festivities must have seemed very brilliant, all lighted up by their thousands of candles, and with the great portico illuminated. And when one reflected that ruin perhaps lay beneath it all! We sat there in the vestibule like rats that hold counsel with each other at the bottom of a ship's hold, when the vessel is beginning to leak and before the crew has found it out, and I saw clearly that all the lackeys and chambermaids would not be long in decamping at the first note of alarm. Could such a catastrophe indeed be possible? And in that case what would become of me, and the Territorial, and the money I had advanced, and the arrears due to me?

That Francis has left me with a cold shudder down my back.

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XVI

A PUBLIC MAN

THE bright warmth of a clear May afternoon heated the lofty casement windows of the Mora mansion to the temperature of a greenhouse. The blue silk curtains were visible from outside through the branches of the trees, and the wide terraces, where exotic flowers were planted out of doors for the first time of the season, ran in borders along the whole length of the quay. The raking of the garden paths traced the light footprints of summer in the sand, while the soft fall of the water from the hoses on the lawns was its refreshing song.

All the luxury of the princely residence lay sunning itself in the soft warmth of the temperature, borrowing a beauty from the silence, the repose of this noontide hour, the only hour when the roll of carriages was not to be heard under the arches, nor the banging of the great doors of the antechamber, and that perpetual vibration which the ringing of bells upon arrivals or departures sent coursing through the very ivy on the walls; the feverish pulse of the life of a fashionable house. It was known that up to three o'clock the duke held his reception at the Ministry, and that the duchess, a Swede still benumbed by the snows of Stockholm, had hardly issued from her drowsy curtains; consequently nobody came to call, neither visitors nor petitioners, and only the footmen, perched like flamingoes on the deserted flight of steps in front of the house, gave the place a touch of animation with the slim shadows of their long legs and their yawning weariness of idlers.

As an exception, however, that day Jenkins's brougham was standing waiting in a corner of the court-yard. The duke, unwell since the previous evening, had felt worse

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after leaving the breakfast-table, and in all haste had sent for the man of the pearls in order to question him on his singular condition. Pain nowhere, sleep and appetite as usual; only an inconceivable lassitude, and a sense of terrible chill which nothing could dissipate. Thus at that moment, notwithstanding the brilliant spring sunshine which flooded his chamber and almost extinguished the fire flaming in the grate, the duke was shivering beneath his furs, surrounded by screens; and while signing papers for an *attaché* of his cabinet on a low table of gold lacquer, placed so near to the fire that it frizzled, he kept holding out his numb fingers every moment towards the blaze, which might have burned the skin without restoring circulation.

Was it anxiety caused by the indisposition of his illustrious client? Jenkins appeared nervous, disquieted, walked backward and forward with long strides over the carpet, hunting about right and left, seeking in the air something which he believed to be present, a subtle and intangible something like the trace of a perfume or the invisible track left by a bird in its flight. You heard the crackling of the wood in the fireplace, the rustle of papers hurriedly turned over, the indolent voice of the duke indicating in a sentence, always precise and clear, a reply to a letter of four pages, and the respectful monosyllables of the *attaché*—"Yes, M. le Ministre," "No, M. le Ministre"; then the scraping of a rebellious and heavy pen. Out of doors the swallows were twittering merrily over the water, the sound of a clarinet was wafted from somewhere near the bridges.

"It is impossible," suddenly said the Minister of State, rising. "Take that away, Lartigues; you must return to-morrow. I cannot write. I am too cold. See, doctor; feel my hands—one would think that they had just come out of a pail of iced water. For the last two days my whole body has been the same. Isn't it too absurd, in this weather!"

"I am not surprised," muttered the Irishman, in a sullen, curt tone, rarely heard from that honeyed personage.

The door had closed upon the young *attaché*, bearing off his papers with majestic dignity, but very happy, I

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imagine, to feel himself free and to be able to stroll for an hour or two, before returning to the Ministry, in the Tuileries gardens, full of spring frocks and pretty girls sitting near the still empty chairs round the band, under the chestnut-trees in flower, through which from root to summit there ran the great thrill of the month when nests are built. The *attaché* was certainly not frozen.

Jenkins, silently, examined his patient, sounded him and tapped his chest; then, in the same rough tone which might be explained by his anxious devotion, the annoyance of the doctor who sees his orders transgressed:

"Ah, now, my dear duke, what sort of life have you been living lately?"

He knew from the gossip of the antechamber—in the case of his regular clients the doctor did not disdain this—he knew that the duke had a new favourite, that this caprice of recent date possessed him, excited him in an extraordinary measure, and the fact, taken together with other observations made elsewhere, had implanted in Jenkins's mind a suspicion, a mad desire to know the name of this new mistress. It was this that he was trying to read on the pale face of his patient, attempting to fathom the depth of his thoughts rather than the origin of his malady. But he had to deal with one of those faces which are hermetically sealed, like those little coffers with a secret spring which hold jewels and women's letters, one of those discreet natures closed by a cold, blue eye, a glance of steel by which the most astute perspicacity may be baffled.

"You are mistaken, doctor," replied his excellency tranquilly. "I have made no change in my habits."

"Very well, M. le Duc, you have done wrong," remarked the Irishman abruptly, furious at having made no discovery.

And then, feeling that he was going too far, he gave vent to his bad temper and to the severity of his diagnosis in words which were a tissue of banalities and axioms. One ought to take care. Medicine was not magic. The power of the Jenkins pearls was limited by human strength, by the necessities of age, by the resources of nature, which,

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unfortunately, are not inexhaustible. The duke interrupted him in an irritable tone:

"Come, Jenkins, you know very well that I don't like phrases. I am not all right, then? What is the matter with me? What is the reason of this chilliness?"

"It is anæmia, exhaustion—a sinking of the oil in the lamp."

"What must I do?"

"Nothing. An absolute rest. Eat, sleep, nothing besides. If you could go and spend a few weeks at Grandbois."

Mora shrugged his shoulders:

"And the Chamber—and the Council—and—? Nonsense! how is it possible?"

"In any case, M. le Duc, you must put the brake on; as somebody said, renounce absolutely——"

Jenkins was interrupted by the entry of the servant on duty, who, discreetly, on tiptoe, like a dancing-master, came in to deliver a letter and a card to the Minister of State, who was still shivering before the fire. At the sight of that satin-gray envelope of a peculiar shape the Irishman started involuntarily, while the duke, having opened and glanced over his letter, rose with new vigour, his cheeks wearing that light flush of artificial health which all the heat of the stove had not been able to bring there.

"My dear doctor, I must at any price——"

The servant still stood waiting.

"What is it? Ah, yes; this card. Take the visitor to the gallery. I shall be there directly."

The gallery of the Duke de Mora, open to visitors twice a week, was for himself, as it were, a neutral ground, a public place where he could see any one without binding or compromising himself in any way. Then, the servant having withdrawn:

"Jenkins, *mon bon,* you have already worked miracles for me. I ask you for one more. Double the dose of my pearls; find something, whatever you will. But I must be feeling young by Sunday. You understand me, altogether young."

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And on the little letter in his hand, his fingers, warm once more and feverish, clinched themselves with a thrill of eager desire.

"Take care, M. le Duc," said Jenkins, very pale and with compressed lips. "I have no wish to alarm you unnecessarily with regard to the feeble state of your health, but it becomes my duty——"

Mora gave a smile of pretty arrogance:

"Your duty and my pleasure are two separate things, my worthy friend. Let me burn the candle at both ends, if it amuses me. I have never had so fine an opportunity as this time."

He started:

"The duchess!"

A door concealed behind a curtain had just opened to give passage to a merry little head with fair curls in disorder, quite fairy-like amid the laces and frills of a dressing-jacket worthy of a princess:

"What do I hear? You have not gone out? But do scold him, doctor. He is wrong, isn't he, to have so many fancies about himself? Look at him—a picture of health!"

"There—you see," said the duke, laughing, to the Irishman. "You will not come in, duchess?"

"No, I am going to carry you off, on the contrary. My uncle d'Estaing has sent me a cage full of tropical birds. I want to show them to you. Wonderful creatures, of all colours, with little eyes like black pearls. And so sensitive to cold—nearly as much so as you are."

"Let us go and have a look at them," said the minister. "Wait for me, Jenkins. I shall be back in a moment."

Then, noticing that he still had his letter in his hand, he threw it carelessly into the drawer of the little table at which he had been signing papers, and left the room behind the duchess, with the fine coolness of a husband accustomed to these changes of situation.

What prodigious mechanic, what incomparable manufacturer of toys, must it have been who succeeded in endowing the human mask with its suppleness, its marvellous elasticity! How interesting to observe the face of this great

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seigneur surprised in the very planning of his adultery, with cheeks flushed in the anticipation of promised delights, calming down at a moment's notice into the serenity of conjugal tenderness; how fine the devout obsequiousness, the paternal smile, after the Franklin model, of Jenkins, in the presence of the duchess, giving place suddenly, when he found himself alone, to a savage expression of anger and hatred, the pallor of a criminal, the pallor of a Castaing or of a Lapommerais hatching his sinister treasons.

One rapid glance towards each of the two doors, and he stood before the drawer full of precious papers, the little gold key still remaining in the lock with an arrogant carelessness, which seemed to say, "No one will dare."

Jenkins dared.

The letter lay there, the first on a pile of others. The grain of the paper, an address of three words dashed off in a simple, bold handwriting, and then the perfume, that intoxicating, suggestive perfume, the very breath of her divine lips— It was true, then, his jealous love had not deceived him, nor the embarrassment she had shown in his presence for some time past, nor the secretive and rejuvenated airs of Constance, nor those bouquets magnificently blooming in the studio as in the shadow of an intrigue. That indomitable pride had surrendered, then, at last? But in that case, why not to him, Jenkins? To him who had loved her for so long —always; who was ten years younger than the other man, and who certainly was troubled with no cold shiverings! All these thoughts passed through his head like arrows shot from a tireless bow. And, stabbed through and through, torn to pieces, his eyes blinded, he stood there looking at the little satiny and cold envelope which he did not dare open for fear of dismissing a final doubt, when the rustling of a curtain warned him that some one had just come in. He threw the letter back quickly, and closed the wonderfully adjusted drawer of the lacquered table.

"Ah! it is you, Jansoulet. How is it you are here?"

"His excellency told me to come and wait for him in his room," replied the Nabob, very proud of being thus introduced into the privacy of the apartments, at an hour,

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especially, when visitors were not generally received. As a fact, the duke was beginning to show a real liking for this savage, for several reasons: to begin with, he liked audacious people, adventurers who followed their lucky star. Was he not one of them himself? Then, the Nabob amused him; his accent, his frank manners, his rather coarse and impudent flattery, were a change for him from the eternal conventionality of his surroundings, from that scourge of administrative and court life which he held in horror—the set speech—in such great horror that he never finished a sentence which he had begun. The Nabob had an unforeseen way of finishing his which was sometimes full of surprises. A fine gambler as well, losing games of *écarté* at five thousand francs the fish without flinching. And so convenient when one wanted to get rid of a picture, always ready to buy, no matter at what price. To these motives of condescending kindness there had come to be joined of late a sentiment of pity and indignation in face of the tenacity with which the unfortunate man was being persecuted, the cowardly and merciless war so ably managed, that public opinion, always credulous and with neck outstretched to see which way the wind is blowing, was beginning to be seriously influenced. One must do to Mora the justice of admitting that he was no follower of the crowd. When he had seen in a corner of the gallery the simple but rather piteous and discomfited face of the Nabob, he had thought it cowardly to receive him there, and had sent him up to his private room.

Jenkins and Jansoulet, sufficiently embarrassed by each other's presence, exchanged a few commonplace words. Their great friendship had recently cooled, Jansoulet having refused point-blank all further subsidies to the Bethlehem Society, leaving the business on the Irishman's hands, who was furious at this defection, and much more furious still at this moment because he had not been able to open Félicia's letter before the arrival of the intruder. The Nabob, on his side, was asking himself whether the doctor was going to be present at the conversation which he wished to have with the duke on the subject of the infamous insinu-

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ations with which the *Messenger* was pursuing him; anxious also to know whether these calumnies might not have produced a coolness in that sovereign good-will which was so necessary to him at the moment of the verification of his election. The greeting which he had received in the gallery had half reassured him on this point; he was entirely satisfied when the duke entered and came towards him with outstretched hand:

"Well, my poor Jansoulet, I hope Paris is making you pay dearly enough for your welcome. What brawling and hate and spite one finds!"

"Ah, M. le Duc, if you knew——"

"I know. I have read it," said the minister, moving closer to the fire.

"I sincerely hope that your excellency does not believe these infamies. Besides, I have here—I bring the proof."

With his strong hairy hands, trembling with emotion, he hunted among the papers in an enormous shagreen portfolio which he had under his arm.

"Never mind that—never mind. I am acquainted with the whole affair. I know that, wilfully or not, they have mixed you up with another person, whom family considerations——"

The duke could not restrain a smile at the bewilderment of the Nabob, stupefied to find him so well informed.

"A Minister of State has to know everything. But don't worry. Your election will be declared valid all the same. And once declared valid——"

Jansoulet heaved a sigh of relief.

"Ah, M. le Duc, how it cheers me to hear you speak thus! I was beginning to lose all confidence. My enemies are so powerful. And a piece of bad luck into the bargain. Do you know that it is Le Merquier himself who is charged with the report on my election?"

"Le Merquier? The devil!"

"Yes, Le Merquier, Hemerlingue's agent, the dirty hypocrite who converted the baroness, no doubt because his religion forbade him to have a Mohammedan for a mistress."

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"Come, come, Jansoulet."

"Well, M. le Duc? One can't help being angry. Think of the situation in which these wretches are placing me. Here I ought to have had my election made valid a week ago, and they arrange the postponement of the sitting expressly because they know the terrible position in which I am placed—my whole fortune paralyzed, the Bey waiting for the decision of the Chamber to decide whether or not he can plunder me. I have eighty millions over there, M. le Duc, and here I begin to be short of money. If the thing goes on only a little longer——"

He wiped away the big drops of sweat that trickled down his cheeks.

"Ah, well, I will look after this validation myself," said the minister sharply. "I will write to what's-his-name to hurry up with his report; and even if I have to be carried to the Chamber——"

"Your excellency is unwell?" asked Jansoulet, in a tone of interest which, I swear to you, had no affectation about it.

"No—a little weakness. I am rather anæmic—wanting blood; but Jenkins is going to put me right. Aren't you, Jenkins?"

The Irishman, who had not been listening, made a vague gesture.

"*Tonnerre!* And here am I with only too much of it."

And the Nabob loosened his cravat about his neck, swollen like an apoplexy by his emotion and the heat of the room. "If I could only transfer a little to you, M. le Duc!"

"It would be an excellent thing for both," said the Minister of State with pale irony. "For you, especially, who are a violent fellow, and who at this moment need so much self-control. Take care on that point, Jansoulet. Beware of the hot retorts, the steps taken in a fit of temper to which they would like to drive you. Repeat to yourself now that you are a public man, on a platform, all of whose actions are observed from far. The newspapers are abusing you; don't read them, if you cannot conceal the emotion which they cause you. Don't do what I did, with my blind man of the Pont de la Concorde, that frightful clarinet-player,

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who for the last ten years has been blighting my life by playing all day 'De tes fils, Norma.' I have tried everything to get him away from there—money, threats. Nothing has succeeded in inducing him to go. The police? Ah, yes, indeed. With modern ideas, it becomes quite a business to clear off a blind man from a bridge. The Opposition newspapers would talk of it, the Parisians would make a story out of it—'*The Cobbler and the Financier.*' 'The Duke and the Clarinet.' No, I must resign myself. It is, besides, my own fault. I never ought to have let this man see that he annoyed me. I am sure that my torture makes half the pleasure of his life now. Every morning he comes forth from his wretched lodging with his dog, his folding-stool, his frightful music, and says to himself, 'Come, let us go and worry the Duc de Mora.' Not a day does he miss, the wretch! Why, see, if I were but to open the window a trifle, you would hear his deluge of little sharp notes above the noise of the water and the traffic. Well, this journalist of the *Messenger*, he is your clarinet; if you allow him to see that his music wearies you, he will never finish. And with this, my dear deputy, I will remind you that you have a meeting at three o'clock at the offices, and I must send you back to the Chamber."

Then turning to Jenkins:

"You know what I asked of you, doctor—pearls for the day after to-morrow; and let them be extra strong!"

Jenkins started, shook himself as at the sudden awakening from a dream:

"Certainly, my dear duke. You shall be given some stamina—oh, yes; stamina, breath enough to win the great Derby stakes."

He bowed, and left the room laughing, the veritable laugh of a wolf showing its gleaming white teeth. The Nabob took leave in his turn, his heart filled with gratitude, but not daring to let anything of it appear in presence of this sceptic in whom all demonstrativeness aroused distrust. And the Minister of State, left alone, rolled up in his wraps before the crackling and blazing fire, sheltered in the padded warmth of his luxury, doubled that day by the

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feverish caress of the May sunshine, began to shiver with cold again, to shiver so violently that Félicia's letter which he had reopened and was reading rapturously shook in his hands.

A deputy is in a very singular situation during the period which follows his election and precedes—as they say in parliamentary jargon—the verification of its validity. It is a little like the position of the newly married man during the twenty-four hours separating the civil marriage from its consecration by the Church. Rights of which he cannot avail himself, a half-happiness, a semi-authority, the embarrassment of keeping the balance a little on this side or on that, the lack of a defined footing. One is married and yet not married, a deputy and yet not perfectly sure of being it; only, for the deputy, this uncertainty is prolonged over days and weeks, and since the longer it lasts the more problematical does the validation become, it is like torture for the unfortunate representative on probation to be obliged to attend the Chamber, to occupy a place which he will perhaps not keep, to listen to discussions of which it is possible that he will never hear the end, to fix in his eyes and ears the delicious memory of parliamentary sittings with their sea of bald or apoplectic foreheads, their confused noise of rustling papers, the cries of attendants, wooden knives beating a tattoo on the tables, private conversations from amid which the voice of the orator issues, a thundering or timid solo with a continuous accompaniment.

This situation, at best so trying to the nerves, was complicated in the Nabob's case by these calumnies, at first whispered, now printed, circulated in thousands of copies by the newspapers, with the consequence that he found himself tacitly put in quarantine by his colleagues.

The first days he went and came in the corridors, the library, the dining-room, the lecture-hall, like the rest, delighted to roam through all the corners of that majestic labyrinth; but he was unknown to most of his associates, unacknowledged by a few members of the Rue Royale Club, who avoided him, detested by all the clerical party of which Le Merquier was the head. The financial set was hostile to

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this multi-millionaire, powerful in both "bull" and "bear" market, like those vessels of heavy tonnage which displace the water of a harbour, and thus his isolation only became the more marked by the change in his circumstances and the same enmity followed him everywhere.

His gestures, his manner, showed trace of it in a certain constraint, a sort of hesitating distrust. He felt he was watched. If he went for a minute into the *buffet*, that large, bright room opening on the gardens of the president's house, which he liked because there, at the broad counter of white marble laden with bottles and provisions, the deputies lost their big, imposing airs, the legislative haughtiness allowed itself to become more familiar, even there he knew that the next day there would appear in the *Messenger* a mocking, offensive paragraph exhibiting him to his electors as a wine-bibber of the most notorious order.

Those terrible electors added to his embarrassments.

They arrived in crowds, invaded the Salle des Pas-Perdus, galloped all over the place like little fiery black kids, shouting to each other from one end to the other of the echoing room, "O Pé! O Tché!" inhaling with delight the odour of government, of administration, pervading the air, watching admiringly the ministers as they passed, following in their trail with keen nose, as though from their respected pockets, from their swollen portfolios, there might fall some appointment; but especially surrounding "Moussiou" Jansoulet with so many exacting petitions, reclamations, demonstrations, that, in order to free himself from the gesticulating uproar which made everybody turn round, and turned him as it were into the delegate of a tribe of Tuaregs in the midst of civilized folk, he was obliged to implore with a look the help of some attendant on duty familiar with such acts of rescue, who would come to him with an air of urgency to say "that he was wanted immediately in Bureau No. 8." So at last, embarrassed everywhere, driven from the corridors, from the Pas-Perdus, from the refreshment-room, the poor Nabob had adopted the course of never leaving his seat, where he remained motionless and without speaking during the whole time of the sitting.

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He had, however, one friend in the Chamber, a deputy newly elected for the Deux-Sèvres, called M. Sarigue, a poor man sufficiently resembling the inoffensive and ill-favoured animal whose name he bore, with his red and scanty hair, his timorous eyes, his hopping walk, his white gaiters; he was so timid that he could not utter two words without stuttering, almost voiceless, continually sucking jujubes, which completed the confusion of his speech. One asked what such a weakling as he had come to do in the Assembly, what feminine ambition run mad had urged into public life this being useless for no matter what private activity.

By an amusing irony of fate, Jansoulet, himself agitated by all the anxieties of his own validation, was chosen in Bureau No. 8 to draw up the report on the election in the Deux-Sèvres; and M. Sarigue, humble and supplicating, conscious of his incapacity and filled by a horrible dread of being sent back to his home in disgrace, used to follow about this great jovial fellow with the curly hair and big shoulder-blades that moved like the bellows of a forge beneath a light and tightly fitting frock-coat, without any suspicion that a poor anxious being like himself lay concealed within that solid envelope.

As he worked at the report on the Deux-Sèvres election, as he examined the numerous protests, the accusations of electioneering trickery, meals given, money spent, casks of wine broached at the doors of the mayors' houses, the usual accompaniments of an election in those days, Jansoulet used to shudder on his own account. "Why, I did all that myself," he would say to himself, terrified. Ah! M. Sarigue need not be afraid; never could he have put his hand on an examiner with kinder intentions or more indulgent, for the Nabob, taking pity on the sufferer, knowing by experience how painful is the anguish of waiting, had made haste through his labour; and the enormous portfolio which he carried under his arm, as he left the Mora mansion, contained his report ready to be sent in to the bureau.

Whether it were this first essay in a public function, the kind words of the duke, or the magnificent weather out of doors, keenly enjoyed by this southerner, with his sus-

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ceptibility to wholly physical impressions and accustomed to life under a blue sky and the warmth of the sunshine—however that may have been, certain it is that the attendants of the legislative body beheld that day a proud and haughty Jansoulet whom they had not previously known. The fat Hemerlingue's carriage, caught sight of at the gate, recognisable by the unusual width of its doors, completed his reinstatement in the possession of his true nature of assurance and bold audacity. "The enemy is there. Attention!" As he crossed the Salle des Pas-Perdus, he caught sight of the financier chatting in a corner with Le Merquier, the examiner; he passed quite near them, and looked at them with a triumphant air which made people wonder:

"What is the meaning of this?"

Then, highly pleased at his own coolness, he passed on towards the committee-rooms, big and lofty apartments opening right and left on a long corridor, and having large tables covered with green baize, and heavy chairs all of a similar pattern and bearing the impress of a dull solemnity. People were beginning to come in. Groups were taking up their positions, discussing matters, gesticulating, with bows, shakings of hands, inclinations of the head, like Chinese shadows against the luminous background of the windows.

Men were there who walked about with bent back, solitary, as it were crushed down beneath the weight of the thoughts which knitted their brow. Others were whispering in their neighbours' ears, confiding to each other exceedingly mysterious and terribly important pieces of news, finger on lip, eyes opened wide in silent recommendation to discretion. A provincial flavour characterized it all, varieties of intonation, the violence of southern speech, drawling accents of the central districts, the sing-song of Brittany, fused into one and the same imbecile self-conceit, frock-coats as they cut them at Landerneau, mountain shoes, homespun linen, and a self-assurance begotten in a village or in the club of some insignificant town, local expressions, provincialisms abruptly introduced into the speech of the political and administrative world, that flabby and colour-

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less phraseology which has invented such expressions as "burning questions that come again to the surface" and "individualities without mandate."

To see these excited or thoughtful people, you might have supposed them the greatest apostles of ideas in the world; unfortunately, on the days of the sittings they underwent a transformation, sat in hushed silence in their places, laughing in servile fashion at the jests of the clever man who presided over them, or only rising to make ridiculous propositions, the kind of interruption which would tempt one to believe that it is not a type only, but a whole race, that Henri Monnier has satirized in his immortal sketch. Two or three orators in all the Chamber, the rest well qualified to plant themselves before the fireplace of a provincial drawing-room, after an excellent meal at the Prefect's, and to say in nasal voice, "The administration, gentlemen," or "The Government of the Emperor," but incapable of anything further.

Ordinarily the good Nabob had been dazzled by these poses, that buzzing as of an empty spinning-wheel which is made by would-be important people; but to-day he found his own place, and fell in with the general note. Seated at the centre of the green table, his portfolio open before him, his elbows planted well forward upon it, he read the report drawn up by de Géry, and the members of the committee looked at him in amazement.

It was a concise, clear, and rapid summary of their fortnight's proceedings, in which they found their ideas so well expressed that they had great difficulty in recognising them. Then, as two or three among them considered the report too favourable, that it passed too lightly over certain protests that had reached the committee, the examiner addressed the meeting with an astonishing assurance, with the prolixity, the verbosity of his own people, demonstrated that a deputy ought not to be held responsible beyond a certain point for the imprudence of his election agents, that no election, otherwise, would bear a minute examination, and since in reality it was his own cause that he was pleading, he brought to the task a conviction, an irresistible en-

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thusiasm, taking care to let out now and then one of those long, dull substantives with a thousand feet, such as the committee loved.

The others listened to him thoughtfully, communicating their sentiments to each other by nods of the head, making flourishes, in order the better to concentrate their attention, and drawing heads on their blotting-pads—a proceeding which harmonized well with the schoolboyish noises in the corridors, a murmur of lessons in course of repetition, and those droves of sparrows which you could hear chirping under the casements in a flagged court-yard, just like the court-yard of a school. The report having been adopted, M. Sarigue was summoned in order that he might offer some supplementary explanations. He arrived, pale, emaciated, stuttering like a criminal before conviction, and you would have laughed to see with what an air of authority and protection Jansoulet encouraged and reassured him. "Calm yourself, my dear colleague." But the members of Committee No. 8 did not laugh. They were all, or nearly all, Sarigues in their way, two or three of them being absolutely broken down, stricken by partial paralysis. So much assurance, such great eloquence, had moved them to enthusiasm.

When Jansoulet issued from the legislative assembly, reconducted to his carriage by his grateful colleague, it was about six o'clock. The splendid weather—a beautiful sunset over the Seine, which lay stretching away like molten gold on the Trocadero side—was a temptation to a walk for this robust plebeian, on whom it was imposed by the conventions that he should ride in a carriage and wear gloves, but who escaped such encumbrances as often as he possibly could. He dismissed his servants, and, with his portfolio under his arm, set forth across the Pont de la Concorde.

Since the first of May he had not experienced such a sense of well-being. With rolling gait, hat a little to the back of his head, in the position in which he had seen it worn by overworked politicians harassed by pressure of business, allowing all the laborious fever of their brain to evaporate in the coolness of the air, as a factory discharges its steam into the gutter at the end of a day's work, he

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moved forward among other figures like his own, evidently coming too from that colonnaded temple which faces the Madeleine above the fountains of the *Place.* As they passed, people turned to look after them, saying, "Those are deputies." And Jansoulet felt the delight of a child, a plebeian joy, compounded of ignorance and naïve vanity.

"Ask for the *Messenger,* evening edition."

The words came from a newspaper kiosk at the corner of the bridge, full at that hour of fresh printed sheets in heaps, which two women were quickly folding, and which smelt of the damp press—late news, the success of the day or its scandal.

Nearly all the deputies bought a copy as they passed, and glanced over it quickly in the hope of finding their name. Jansoulet, for his part, feared to see his in it and did not stop. Then suddenly he reflected: "Must not a public man be above these weaknesses? I am strong enough now to read everything." He retraced his steps and took a newspaper like his colleagues. He opened it, very calmly, right at the place usually occupied by Moëssard's articles. As it happened, there was one. Still the same title: "*Chinoiseries,*" and an *M.* for signature.

"Ah! ah!" said the public man, firm and cold as marble, with a fine smile of disdain. Mora's lesson still rung in his ears, and, had he forgotten it, the air from *Norma* which was being slowly played in little ironical notes not far off would have sufficed to recall it to him. Only, after all calculations have been made amid the fleeting happenings of our existence, there is always the unforeseen to be reckoned with; and that is how it came that the poor Nabob suddenly felt a wave of blood blind him, a cry of rage strangle itself in the sudden contraction of his throat. This time his mother, his old Frances, had been dragged into the infamous joke of the "Bateau de fleurs." How well he aimed his blows, this Moëssard, how well he knew the really sensitive spots in that heart, so frankly exposed!

"Be quiet, Jansoulet; be quiet."

It was in vain that he repeated the words to himself again and again: anger, a wild anger, that intoxication of

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the blood that demands blood, took possession of him. His first impulse was to hail a cab, that he might escape from the irritating street, free his body from the preoccupation of walking and maintaining a physical composure—to hail a cab as for a wounded man. But the carriages which thronged the square at that hour of general home-going were victorias, landaus, private broughams, hundreds of them, passing down from the lurid splendour of the Arc de Triomphe towards the violet shadows of the Tuileries, rushing, it seemed, one over another, in the sloping perspective of the avenue, down to the great square where the motionless statues, with their circular crowns on their brows, watched them as they separated towards the Faubourg Saint-Germain, the Rue Royale and the Rue de Rivoli.

Jansoulet, his newspaper in his hand, traversed this tumult without giving it a thought, carried by force of habit towards the club where he went every day for his game of cards from six to seven. A public man, he was that still; but excited, speaking aloud, muttering oaths and threats in a voice that had suddenly grown tender again at the memory of the dear old woman. To have dragged her into that—her also! Oh, if she should read it, if she should understand! What punishment could he invent for such an infamy? He had reached the Rue Royale, up which were disappearing with the speed of horses that knew they were going home and with glancings of shining axles, visions of veiled women, heads of fair-haired children, equipages of all kinds returning from the Bois, depositing a little genuine earth upon the Paris pavement, and bringing odours of spring mingled with the scent of *poudre de riz*.

Opposite the Ministry of Marine, a very high phaeton on light wheels, rather like a great spider, its body represented by the little groom hanging on to the box and the two persons occupying the front seat, just missed a collision with the curb as it turned the corner.

The Nabob raised his head and stifled a cry.

Beside a painted woman, with red hair and wearing a tiny hat with wide strings, who, perched on her leathern cushion, sat leaning stiffly forward, hands, eyes, her whole

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factitious person intent on driving the horse, there sat, pink and made-up also, grown fat with the same vices, Moëssard, the handsome Moëssard—the harlot and the journalist; and of the two, it was not the woman who had sold herself the most. High above those women reclining in their open carriages, those men opposite them half buried beneath the flounces of their gowns, all those poses of fatigue and weariness which the overfed exhibit in public as in contempt of pleasure and riches, they lorded it insolently, she very proud to be seen driving with the lover of the Queen, and he without the least shame in sitting beside a creature who hooked men in the drives of the Bois with the lash of her whip, removed on her high-perched seat from all fear of the salutary raids of the police. Perhaps, in order to whet the appetite of his royal mistress, he chose to parade beneath her windows in the company of Suzanne Bloch, known as Suze the Red.

"Hep! hep, then!"

The horse, a high trotter with slim legs, just such a horse as a *cocotte* would care to own, recovered from its swerve and resumed its proper place with dancing steps, graceful pawings executed on the same spot without advancing. Jansoulet let fall his portfolio, and as though he had dropped with it all his gravity, his prestige as a public man, he made a terrible spring, and dashed to the bit of the animal, which he held firm with his strong, hairy hands.

A carriage forcibly stopped in the Rue Royale, and in broad daylight—only this Tartar would have dared such a stroke as that!

"Get down!" said he to Moëssard, whose face had turned green and yellow when he saw him. "Get down immediately!"

"Will you let go my horse, you bloated idiot! Whip up, Suzanne; it is the Nabob."

She tried to gather up the reins, but the animal, held firmly, reared so sharply that a little more and like a sling the fragile vehicle would have sent everybody in it flying far away. At this, furious with one of those plebeian rages which in women of her kind shatter all the veneer of their

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luxury, she dealt the Nabob two stinging lashes with her whip, which left little trace on his tanned and hardened face, but which brought there a ferocious expression, accentuated by the short nose which had turned white and was slit at the end like that of a sporting terrier.

"Come down, or, by God, I will upset the whole thing!"

Amid an eddy of carriages arrested by the block in the traffic, or that passed slowly round the obstacle, with thousands of curious eyes, amid cries of coachmen and clinking of bits, two wrists of iron shook the entire vehicle.

"Jump—but jump, I tell you! Don't you see he will have us over? What a grip!"

And the woman looked at the Hercules with interest.

Hardly had Moëssard set foot to the ground, and before he could take refuge on the pavement, whither the black military caps of policemen could be seen hastening, Jansoulet threw himself upon him, lifted him by the back of the neck like a rabbit, and, careless of his protestations and his terrified stammerings:

"Yes, yes, I will give you satisfaction, you blackguard! But, first, I intend to do to you what is done to dirty beasts to prevent them from repeating the same offence."

And roughly he set to work rubbing his nose and face all over with his newspaper, which he had rolled into a ball, stifling him, blinding him with it, and making scratches from which the blood trickled over his skin. The man was dragged from his hands, crimson, suffocated. A little more and he would have killed him.

The struggle over, pulling down his sleeves, adjusting his crumpled linen, picking up his portfolio out of which the papers of the Sarigue election were flying scattered even to the gutter, the Nabob answered the policemen who were asking him for his name in order to draw up a summons:

"Bernard Jansoulet, Deputy for Corsica."

A public man!

Only then did he remember that he was one. Who would have suspected it, seeing him breathless and bareheaded, like a porter after a street fight, under the eager, coldly mocking glances of the crowd?

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XVII

THE APPARITION

If you want simple and sincere feeling, if you would see overflowing affection, tenderness, laughter—the laughter born of great happiness which, at a tiny movement of the lips, is brought to the verge of tears—and the beautiful wild joy of youth illumined by bright eyes transparent to the very depths of the souls behind them—all these things you may find this Sunday morning in a house that you know of, a new house, down yonder, right at the end of the old faubourg. The glass door on the ground floor shines more brightly than usual. More gaily than ever dance the letters over the door, and from the open windows comes the sound of glad cries, flowing from a stream of happiness.

"Accepted! it is accepted! Oh, what good luck! Henriette, Élise, do come here! M. Maranne's play is accepted!"

André heard the news yesterday. Cardailhac, the manager of the *Nouveautés*, sent for him to inform him that his play was to be produced immediately—that it would be put on next month. They passed the evening discussing scenic arrangements and the distribution of parts; and, as it was too late to knock at his neighbour's door when he got home from the theatre, the happy author waited for the morning in feverish impatience, and then, as soon as he heard people stirring below and the shutters open with a click against the house-front, he made haste to go down to announce the good news to his friends. Just now they are all assembled together, the young ladies in pretty *déshabillé*, their hair hastily twisted up, and M. Joyeuse, whom the announcement had surprised in the midst of shaving, presenting under his embroidered night-cap a strange face

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divided into two parts, one side shaved, the other not. But André Maranne is the most excited, for you know what the acceptance of *Revolt* means for him; what was agreed between them and Bonne Maman. The poor fellow looks at her as if to find an encouragement in her eyes; and the rather mischievous, kind eyes seem to say, "Make the experiment, in any case. What is the risk?" To give himself courage he looks also at Mlle. Élise, pretty as a flower, with her long eyelashes drooped. At last, making up his mind:

"M. Joyeuse," said he thickly, "I have a very serious communication to make to you."

M. Joyeuse expresses astonishment.

"A communication? Ah, *mon Dieu,* you alarm me!"

And, lowering his voice:

"Are the girls in the way?"

"No. Bonne Maman knows what I mean. Mlle. Élise also must have some suspicion of it. It is only the children."

Mlle. Henriette and her sister are asked to retire, which they immediately do, the one with a dignified and annoyed air, like a true daughter of the Saint-Amands, the other, the young Chinese Yaïa, hardly hiding a wild desire to laugh.

Thereupon a great silence; after which, the lover begins his little story.

I quite believe that Mlle. Élise has some suspicion in her mind, for as soon as their young neighbour spoke of a communication, she drew her *Ansart et Rendu* from her pocket and plunged precipitately into the adventures of somebody surnamed the Hutin, thrilling reading which makes the book tremble in her hands. There is reason for trembling, certainly, before the bewilderment, the indignant stupefaction into which M. Joyeuse receives this request for his daughter's hand.

"Is it possible? How has it happened? What an extraordinary event! Who could ever have suspected such a thing?"

And suddenly the good old man burst into a great roar of laughter. Well, no, it is not true. He had heard of the affair; knew all about it, a long time ago.

Her father knew all about it! Bonne Maman had be-

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trayed them then! And before the reproachful glances cast in her direction, the culprit comes forward smiling:

"Yes, my dears, it is I. The secret was too much for me. I found I could not keep it to myself alone. And then, father is so kind—one cannot hide anything from him."

As she says this she throws her arms round the little man's neck; but there is room enough for two, and when Mlle. Élise in her turn takes refuge there, there is still an affectionate, fatherly hand stretched out towards him whom M. Joyeuse considers thenceforward as his son. Silent embraces, long looks meeting each other full of emotion, blessed moments that one would like to hold forever by the fragile tips of their wings. There is chat, and gentle laughter when certain details are recalled. M. Joyeuse tells how the secret was revealed to him in the first instance by tapping spirits, one day when he was alone in André's apartment. "How is business going, M. Maranne?" the spirits had inquired, and he himself had replied in Maranne's absence: "Fairly well, for the season, Sir Spirit." The little man repeats, "Fairly well, for the season," in a mischievous way, while Mlle. Élise, quite confused at the thought that it was with her father that she talked that day, disappears under her fair curls.

After the first stress of emotion they talk more seriously. It is certain that Mme. Joyeuse, *née* de Saint-Amand, would never have consented to this marriage. André Maranne is not rich, still less noble; but the old accountant, luckily, has not the same ideas of grandeur that his wife possessed. They love each other; they are young, healthy, and good-looking—qualities that in themselves constitute fine dowries, without involving any heavy registration fees at the notary's. The new household will be installed on the floor above. The photography will be continued, unless *Revolt* should produce enormous receipts. (The Visionary may be trusted to see to that.) In any case, the father will still remain near them; he has a good place at his stockbroker's office, some expert business in the courts; provided that the little ship continue to sail in deep enough water, all will go well, with the aid of wave, wind, and star.

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Only one question preoccupies M. Joyeuse: "Will André's parents consent to this marriage? How will Dr. Jenkins, so rich, so celebrated, take it?"

"Let us not speak of that man," said André, turning pale; "he is a wretch to whom I owe nothing—who is nothing to me."

He stops, embarrassed by this explosion of anger, which he was unable to restrain and cannot explain, and goes on more gently:

"My mother, who comes to see me sometimes in spite of the prohibition laid upon her, was the first to be told of our plans. She already loves Mlle. Élise as her daughter. You will see, mademoiselle, how good she is, and how beautiful and charming. What a misfortune that she belongs to such a wicked man, who tyrannizes over her, and tortures her even to the point of forbidding her to utter her son's name."

Poor Maranne heaves a sigh that speaks volumes on the great grief which he hides in the depths of his heart. But what sadness would not have been vanquished in presence of that dear face lighted up with its fair curls and the radiant perspective of the future? These serious questions having been settled, they are able to open the door and recall the two exiles. In order to avoid filling their little heads with thoughts above their age, it has been agreed to say nothing about the prodigious event, to tell them nothing except that they have all to make haste and dress, breakfast still more quickly, so as to be able to spend the afternoon in the Bois, where Maranne will read his play to them, before they go on to Suresnes to have dinner at Kontzen's: a whole programme of delights in honour of the acceptance of *Revolt*, and of another piece of good news which they will hear later.

"Ah, really—what is it, then?" ask the two little girls, with an innocent air.

But if you fancy they don't know what is in the air, if you think that when Mlle. Élise used to give three raps on the ceiling they imagined that it was for information on business, you are more ingenuous even than *le père* Joyeuse.

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"That's all right—that's all right, children; go and dress, in any case."

Then there begins another refrain:

"What frock must I put on, Bonne Maman—the gray?"

"Bonne Maman, there is a string off my hat."

"Bonne Maman, my child, have I no more starched cravats left?"

For ten minutes the charming grandmother is besieged with questions and entreaties. Every one needs her help in some way; it is she who has the keys of everything, she who gives out the pretty, white, fine goffered linen, the embroidered handkerchiefs, the best gloves, all the dainty things which, taken out from drawers and wardrobes, spread over the bed, fill a house with a bright Sunday gaiety.

The workers, the people with tasks to fulfil, alone know that delight which returns each week consecrated by the customs of a nation. For these prisoners of the week, the almanac with its closed prison-like gratings opens at regular intervals into luminous spaces, with breaths of refreshing air. It is the Sunday, the day that seems so long to fashionable folk, to the Parisians of the boulevard whose habits it disturbs, so gloomy to people far from their homes and relatives, that constitutes for a multitude of human beings the only recompense, the one aim of the desperate efforts of six days of toil. Neither rain nor hail, nothing makes any difference, nothing will prevent them from going out, from closing behind them the door of the deserted workshop, of the stuffy little lodging. But when the springtime is come, when the May sunshine glitters on it as this morning, and it can deck itself out in gay colours, then indeed Sunday is the holiday of holidays.

If one would know it well, it must be seen especially in the working quarters of the town, in those gloomy streets which it lights up and enlarges by closing the shops, keeping in their sheds the heavy drays and trucks, leaving the space free for wandering bands of children washed and in their Sunday clothes, and for games of battledore and shuttlecock played amid the great circlings of the swallows beneath some porch of old Paris. It must be seen in the

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densely populated, feverishly toiling suburbs, where, as soon as morning is come, you may feel it hovering, reposeful and sweet, in the silence of the factories, passing with the ringing of church-bells and that sharp whistle of the railways, and filling the horizon, all around the outskirts of the city, with an immense song, as it were, of departure and of deliverance. Then one understands it and loves it.

O Sunday of Paris, Sunday of the toilers and the humble, often have I cursed thee without reason, I have poured whole streams of abusive ink over thy noisy and extravagant joys, over the dust of railway stations filled by thy uproar and the maddening omnibuses that thou takest by assault, over thy tavern songs bawled everywhere from carts adorned with green and pink dresses, on thy barrel-organs grinding out their tunes beneath the balconies of deserted court-yards; but to-day, abjuring my errors, I exalt thee, and I bless thee for all the joy and relief thou givest to courageous and honest labour, for the laughter of the children who greet thee with acclamation, the pride of mothers happy to dress their little ones in their best clothes in thy honour, for the dignity thou dost preserve in the homes of the poorest, the glorious raiment set aside for thee at the bottom of the old shaky chest of drawers; I bless thee especially by reason of all the happiness thou hast brought that morning to the great new house in the old faubourg.

Toilettes having been completed, the *déjeuner* finished, taken on the thumb, as they say—and you can imagine what quantity these young ladies' thumbs would carry—they came to put on their hats before the mirror in the drawing-room. Bonne Maman threw around her supervising glance, inserted a pin here, retied a ribbon there, straightened her father's cravat; but while all this little world was stamping with impatience, beckoned out of doors by the beauty of the day, there came a ring at the bell, echoing through the apartment and disturbing their gay proceedings.

"Suppose we don't open the door?" propose the children.

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And what a relief, what a cry of delight, when they see their friend Paul come in!

"Quick! quick! Come and let us tell you the good news."

He knew well, before any of them, that the play had been accepted. He had had a good deal of trouble to get it read by Cardailhac, who, the moment he saw its "short lines," as he called verse, wished to send the manuscript to the Levantine and her *masseur,* as he was wont to do in the case of all beginners in the writing of drama. But Paul was careful not to refer to his own intervention. As for the other event, the one of which nothing was said, on account of the children, he guessed it easily by the trembling greeting of Maranne, whose fair mane was standing straight up over his forehead by reason of the poet's two hands having been pushed through it so many times, a thing he always did in his moments of joy, by the slightly embarrassed demeanour of Élise, by the triumphant airs of M. Joyeuse, who was standing very erect in his new summer clothes, with all the happiness of his children written on his face.

Bonne Maman alone preserved her usual peaceful air; but one noticed, in the eager alacrity with which she forestalled her sister's wants, a certain attention still more tender than before, an anxiety to make her look pretty. And it was delicious to watch the girl of twenty as she busied herself about the adornment of others, without envy, without regret, with something of the gentle renunciation of a mother welcoming the young love of her daughter in memory of a happiness gone by. Paul saw this; he was the only one who did see it; but while admiring Aline, he asked himself sadly if in that maternal heart there would ever be place for other affections, for preoccupations outside the tranquil and bright circle wherein Bonne Maman presided so prettily over the evening work.

Love is, as one knows, a poor blind creature, deprived of hearing and speech, and only led by presentiments, divinations, the nervous faculties of a sick man. It is pitiable indeed to see him wandering, feeling his way, constantly making false steps, passing his hands over the supports by

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which he guides himself with the distrustful awkwardness of the infirm. At the very moment when Paul was doubting Aline's sensibility, in announcing to his friends that he was about to start on a journey which would occupy several days, perhaps several weeks, did not remark the girl's sudden paleness, did not hear the distressed cry that escaped her lips:

"You are going away?"

He was going away, going to Tunis, very much troubled at leaving his poor Nabob in the midst of the pack of furious wolves that surrounded him. Mora's protection, however, gave him some reassurance; and then, the journey in question was absolutely necessary.

"And the Territorial?" asked the old accountant, ever returning to the subject in his mind. "How are things standing there? I see Jansoulet's name still at the head of the board. You cannot get him out, then, from that Ali-Baba's cave? Take care—take care!"

"Ah, I know all about that, M. Joyeuse. But, to leave it with honour, money is needed, much money, a fresh sacrifice of two or three millions, and we have not got them. That is exactly the reason why I am going to Tunis to try to wrest from the rapacity of the Bey a slice of that great fortune which he is retaining in his possession so unjustly. At present I have still some chance of succeeding, while later on, perhaps——"

"Go, then, and make haste, my dear lad, and if you return, as I wish you may, with a heavy bag, see that you deal first of all with the Paganetti gang. Remember that one shareholder less patient than the rest has the power to smash the whole thing up, to demand an inquiry; and you know what the inquiry would reveal. Now I come to think of it," added M. Joyeuse, whose brow had contracted a frown, "I am even surprised that Hemerlingue, in his hatred for you, has not secretly bought up a few shares."

He was interrupted by the chorus of imprecations which the name of Hemerlingue raised from all the young people, who detested the fat banker for the injury he had done their

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father, and for the ill-will he bore that good Nabob, who was adored in the house through Paul de Géry.

"Hemerlingue, the heartless monster! Wretch! That wicked man!"

But amid all these exclamations, the Visionary was following up his idea of the fat baron becoming a shareholder in the Territorial for the purpose of dragging his enemy into the courts. And you may imagine the stupefaction of André Maranne, a complete stranger to the whole affair, when he saw M. Joyeuse turn to him, and, with face purple and swollen with rage, point his finger at him, with these terrible words:

"The greatest rascal, after all, in this affair, is you, sir!"

"Oh, papa, papa! what are you saying?"

"Eh, what? Ah, forgive me, my dear André. I was fancying myself in the examining magistrate's private room, face to face with that rogue. It is my confounded brain that is always running away with me."

All broke into uproarious laughter, which escaped into the outer air through the open windows, and went to mingle with the thousand noises of moving vehicles and people in their Sunday clothes going up the Avenue des Ternes. The author of *Revolt* took advantage of the diversion to ask whether they were not soon going to start. It was late—the good places would be taken in the Bois.

"To the Bois de Boulogne, on Sunday!" exclaimed Paul de Géry.

"Oh, our Bois is not yours," replied Aline with a smile. "Come with us, and you will see."

Did it ever happen to you, in the course of a solitary and contemplative walk, to lie down on your face in the undergrowth of a forest, amid that vegetation which springs up, various and manifold, through the fallen autumn leaves, and allow your eyes to wander along the level of the ground before you? Little by little the sense of height is lost, the interwoven branches of the oaks above your head form an inaccessible sky, and you behold a new forest extending beneath the other, opening its deep avenues filled by a green and mysterious light, and formed of tiny shrubs or root

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fibres taking the appearance of the stems of sugar-canes, of severely graceful palm-trees, of delicate cups containing a drop of water, of many-branched candlesticks bearing little yellow lights which the wind blows on as it passes. And the miraculous thing is, that beneath these light shadows live minute plants and thousands of insects whose existence, observed from so near at hand, is a revelation to you of all the mysteries. An ant, bending like a wood-cutter under his burden, drags after it a splinter of bark bigger than itself; a beetle makes its way along a blade of grass thrown like a bridge from one stem to another; while beneath a lofty bracken standing isolated in the middle of a patch of velvety moss, a little blue or red insect waits, with antennæ at attention, for another little insect on its way through some desert path over there to arrive at the trysting-place beneath the giant tree. It is a small forest beneath a great one, too near the soil to be noticed by its big neighbours, too humble, too hidden to be reached by its great orchestra of song and storm.

A similar revelation awaits in the Bois de Boulogne. Behind those sanded drives, watered and clean, whereon files of carriage-wheels moving slowly round the lake trace all day long a worn and mechanical furrow, behind that admirably set scene of trimmed green hedges, of captive water, of flowery rocks, the true Bois, a wild wood with perennial undergrowth, grows and flourishes, forming impenetrable recesses traversed by narrow paths and bubbling springs.

This is the Bois of the children, the Bois of the humble, the little forest beneath the great one. And Paul, who knew only the long avenues of the aristocratic Parisian promenades, the sparkling lake perceived from the depths of a carriage or from the top of a coach in a drive back from Longchamps, was astonished to see the deliciously sheltered nook to which his friends had led him. It was on the banks of a pond lying like a mirror under willow-trees, covered with water-lilies, with here and there large white shimmering spaces where sunbeams fell and lay on the bright surface.

On the sloping bank, sheltered by the boughs of trees where the leaves were already thick, they sat down to listen

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to the reading of the play, and the pretty, attentive faces, the skirts lying puffed out over the grass, made one think of some Decameron, more innocent and chaste, in a peaceful atmosphere. To complete this pleasant country scene, two windmill-sails seen through an opening in the branches were revolving over in the direction of Suresnes, while of the dazzling and luxurious vision to be met at every cross-roads in the Bois there reached them only a confused and perpetual murmur, which one ended by ceasing to notice. The poet's voice alone rose in the silence, the verses fell on the air tremblingly, repeated below the breath by other moved lips, and stifled sounds of approbation greeted them, with shudders at the tragic passages. Bonne Maman was even seen to wipe away a big tear. That comes, you see, from having no embroidery in one's hand!

His first work! That was what the *Revolt* was for André, that first work always too exuberant and ornate, into which the author throws, to begin with, whole arrears of ideas and opinions, pent up like the waters of a river-lock; that first work which is often the richest if not the best of its writer's productions. As for the fate that awaited it, no one could predict it; and the uncertainty that hovered over the reading of the drama added to its own emotion that of each auditor, the hopes, all arrayed in white, of Mlle. Élise, the fantastic hallucinations of M. Joyeuse, and the more positive desires of Aline as she installed in advance the modest fortune of her sister in the nest of an artist's household, beaten by the winds but envied by the crowd.

Ah, if one of those idle people, taking a turn for the hundredth time round the lake, overwhelmed by the monotony of his habitual promenade, had come and parted the branches, how surprised he would have been at this picture! But would he ever have suspected how much passion, how many dreams, what poetry and hope there could be contained in that little green corner, hardly larger than the shadow a fern throws on the moss?

"You were right; I did not know the Bois," said Paul in a low voice to Aline, who was leaning on his arm.

They were following a narrow path overarched by the

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boughs of trees, and as they talked were moving forward at a quick pace, well in advance of the others. It was not, however, *père* Kontzen's terrace nor his appetizing fried dishes that drew them on. No; the beautiful lines which they had just heard had carried them away, lifting them to great heights, and they had not yet come down to earth again. They walked straight on towards the ever-retreating end of the road, which opened out at its extremity into a luminous glory, a mass of sunbeams, as if all the sunshine of that beautiful day lay waiting for them where it had fallen on the outskirts of the wood. Never had Paul felt so happy. That light arm that lay on his arm, that child's step by which his own was guided, these alone would have made life sweet and pleasant to him, no less than this walk over the mossy turf of a green path. He would have told the girl so, simply, as he felt it, had he not feared to alarm that confidence which Aline placed in him, no doubt because of the sentiments which she knew he possessed for another woman, and which seemed to hold at a distance from them every thought of love.

Suddenly, right before them, against the bright background, a group of persons riding on horseback came in sight, at first vague and indistinct, then appearing as a man and a woman, handsomely mounted, and entering the mysterious path among the bars of gold, the leafy shadows, the thousand dots of light with which the ground was strewn, and which, displaced by their progress as they cantered along, rose and covered them with flowery patterns from the chests of the horses to the blue veil of the lady rider. They came along slowly, capriciously, and the two young people, who had drawn back into the copse, could see pass close by them, with a clinking of bits proudly shaken and white with foam as though after a furious gallop, two splendid animals carrying a pair of human beings brought very near together by the narrowing of the path; he, supporting with one arm the supple figure moulded in a dark cloth habit; she, with a hand resting on the shoulder of her cavalier and her small head seen in retreating profile beneath the half-dropped tulle of her veil, resting on it tenderly. This em-

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brace, half disturbed by the impatience of the horses, that kiss on which their reins became confused, that passion which stalked in broad day through the Bois with so great a contempt for public opinion, would have been enough to betray the duke and Félicia, if the haughty and charming mien of the lady and the aristocratic ease of her companion, his pallor slightly tinged with colour as the result of his ride and of Jenkins's miraculous pearls, had not already betrayed them.

It was not an extraordinary thing to meet Mora in the Bois on a Sunday. Like his master, he loved to show himself to the Parisians, to advertise his popularity with all sections of the public; and then the duchess never accompanied him on that day, and he could make a halt quite at his ease in that little villa of Saint-James, known to all Paris, whose red towers, outlined among the trees, schoolboys used to point out to each other in whispers. But only a mad woman, a daring affronter of society like this Félicia, could have dreamt of advertising herself like this, with the loss of her reputation forever. A sound of hoofs dying away in the distance, of shrubs brushed in passing; a few plants that had been pressed down and were straightening themselves again; branches pushed out of the way resuming their places—that was all that remained of the apparition.

"You saw?" said Paul, speaking first.

She had seen, and she had understood, notwithstanding the candour of her innocence, for a blush spread over her features, one of those feelings of shame experienced for the faults of those we love.

"Poor Félicia!" she said in a low voice, pitying not only the unhappy woman who had just passed them, but also him whom this defection must have smitten to the very heart. The truth is that Paul de Géry had felt no surprise at this meeting, which justified previous suspicions and the instinctive aversion which he had felt for Félicia at their dinner some days before. But he found it pleasant to be pitied by Aline, to feel the compassion in that voice becoming more tender, in that arm leaning upon his. Like children who pretend to be ill for the sake of the pleasure of

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being fondled by their mother, he allowed his consoler to strive to appease his grief, speaking to him of his brothers, of the Nabob, and of his forthcoming trip to Tunis—a fine country, they said. "You must write to us often, and long letters about the interesting things on the journey, the place you stay in. For one can see those who are far away better when one imagines the kind of place they are inhabiting."

So talking, they reached the end of the bowered path terminating in an immense open glade through which there moved the tumult of the Bois, carriages and riders on horseback alternating with each other, and the crowd at that distance seeming to be tramping through a flaky dust which blended it into a single confused herd. Paul slackened his pace, emboldened by this last minute of solitude.

"Do you know what I am thinking of?" he said, taking Aline's hand. "I am thinking that it would be a pleasure to be unhappy so as to be comforted by you. But however precious your pity may be to me, I cannot allow you to waste your compassion on an imaginary pain. No, my heart is not broken, but more alive, on the contrary, and stronger. And if I were to tell you what miracle it is that has preserved it, what talisman——"

He held out before her eyes a little oval frame in which was set a simple profile, a pencil outline wherein she recognised herself, surprised to see herself so pretty, reflected, as it were, in the magic mirror of Love. Tears came into her eyes without her knowing the reason, an open spring whose stream beat within her chaste breast. He continued:

"This portrait belongs to me. It was drawn for me. And yet, at the moment of starting on this journey I have a scruple. I do not wish to have it except from yourself. Take it, then, and if you find a worthier friend, some one who loves you with a love deeper and more loyal than mine, I am willing that you should give it to him."

She had regained her composure, and looking de Géry full in the face with a serious tenderness, she said:

"If I listened only to my heart, I should feel no hesitation about my reply: for, if you love me as you say, I am

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sure that I love you too. But I am not free; I am not alone in the world. Look yonder."

She pointed to her father and her sisters, who were beckoning to them in the distance and hastening to come up with them.

"Well, and I myself?" answered Paul quickly. "Have I not similar duties, similar responsibilities? We are like two widowed heads of families. Will you not love mine as much as I love yours?"

"True? is it true? You will let me stay with them? I shall be Aline for you, and Bonne Maman for all our children? Oh! then," exclaimed the dear creature, beaming with joy, "there is my portrait—I give it to you! And all my soul with it, too, and forever."

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XVIII

THE JENKINS PEARLS

About a week after his adventure with Moëssard, that new complication in the terrible muddle of his affairs, Jansoulet, on leaving the Chamber, one Thursday, ordered his coachman to drive him to Mora's house. He had not paid a visit there since the scuffle in the Rue Royale, and the idea of finding himself in the duke's presence gave him, through his thick skin, something of the panic that agitates a boy on his way upstairs to see the head-master after a fight in the schoolroom. However, the embarrassment of this first interview had to be gone through. They said in the committee-rooms that Le Merquier had completed his report, a masterpiece of logic and ferocity, that it meant an invalidation, and that he was bound to carry it with a high hand unless Mora, so powerful in the Assembly, should himself intervene and give him his word of command. A serious matter, and one that made the Nabob's cheeks flush, while in the curved mirrors of his brougham he studied his appearance, his courtier's smiles, trying to think out a way of effecting a brilliant entry, one of those strokes of good-natured effrontery which had brought him fortune with Ahmed, and which served him likewise in his relations with the French ambassador. All this accompanied by beatings of the heart and by those shudders between the shoulder-blades which precede decisive actions, even when these are settled within a gilded chariot.

When he arrived at the mansion by the river, he was much surprised to notice that the porter on the quay, as on the days of great receptions, was sending carriages up the Rue de Lille, in order to keep a door free for those leaving. Rather anxious, he wondered, "What is there going on?"

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Perhaps a concert given by the duchess, a charity bazaar, some festivity from which Mora might have excluded him on account of the scandal of his last adventure. And this anxiety was augmented still further when Jansoulet, after having passed across the principal court-yard amid a din of slamming doors and a dull and continuous rumble of wheels over the sand, found himself—after ascending the steps—in the immense entrance-hall filled by a crowd which did not extend beyond any of the doors leading to the rooms; centring its anxious going and coming around the porter's table, where all the famous names of fashionable Paris were being inscribed. It seemed as though a disastrous gust of wind had gone through the house, carrying off a little of its calm, and allowing disquiet and danger to filter into its comfort.

"What a misfortune!"

"Ah! it is terrible."

"And so suddenly!"

Such were the remarks that people were exchanging as they met.

An idea flashed into Jansoulet's mind:

"Is the duke ill?" he inquired of a servant.

"Ah, monsieur, he is dying! He will not live through the night!"

If the roof of the palace had fallen in upon his head he would not have been more utterly stunned. Red lights flashed before his eyes, he tottered, and let himself drop into a seat on a velvet-covered bench beside the great cage of monkeys. The animals, over-excited by all this bustle, suspended by their tails, by their little long-thumbed hands, were hanging to the bars in groups, and came, inquisitive and frightened, to make the most ludicrous grimaces at this big, stupefied man as he sat staring at the marble floor, repeating aloud to himself, "I am ruined! I am ruined!"

The duke was dying. He had been seized suddenly with illness on the Sunday after his return from the Bois. He had felt intolerable burnings in the bowels, which passed through his whole body, searing as with a red-hot iron, and alternating with a cold lethargy and long periods of coma.

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Jenkins, summoned at once, did not say much, but ordered certain sedatives. The next day the pains came on again with greater intensity and followed by the same icy torpor, also more accentuated, as if life, torn up by the roots, were departing in violent spasms. Among those around him none was greatly concerned. "The day after a visit to Saint-James Villa," was muttered in the antechamber, and Jenkins's handsome face preserved its serenity. He had spoken to two or three people, in the course of his morning rounds, of the duke's indisposition, and that so lightly that nobody had paid much attention to the matter.

Mora himself, notwithstanding his extreme weakness, although he felt his head absolutely blank, and, as he said, "not an idea anywhere," was far from suspecting the gravity of his condition. It was only on the third day, on waking in the morning, that the sight of a tiny stream of blood, which had trickled from his mouth over his beard and the stained pillow, had frightened this fastidious man, who had a horror of all human ills, especially sickness, and now saw it arrive stealthily with its pollutions, its weaknesses, and the loss of physical self-control, the first concession made to death. Monpavon, entering the room behind Jenkins, surprised the anxious expression of the great seigneur faced by the terrible truth, and at the same time was horrified by the ravages made in a few hours upon Mora's emaciated face, in which all the wrinkles of age, suddenly evident, were mingled with lines of suffering, and those muscular depressions which tell of serious internal lesions. He took Jenkins aside, while the duke's toilet necessaries were carried to him—a whole apparatus of crystal and silver contrasting with the yellow pallor of the invalid.

"Look here, Jenkins, the duke is very ill."

"I am afraid so," said the Irishman, in a low voice.

"But what is the matter with him?"

"What he wanted, *parbleu!*" answered the other in a fury. "One cannot be young at his age with impunity. This intrigue will cost him dear."

Some evil passion was getting the better of him but he subdued it immediately, and, puffing out his cheeks as

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though his head were full of water, he sighed deeply as he pressed the old nobleman's hands.

"Poor duke! poor duke! Ah, my friend, I am most unhappy!"

"Take care, Jenkins," said Monpavon coldly, disengaging his hands, "you are assuming a terrible responsibility. What! is the duke as bad as that?—ps—ps—ps—Will you see nobody? You have arranged no consultation?"

The Irishman raised his hands as if to say, "What good can it do?"

The other insisted. It was absolutely necessary that Brisset, Jousselin, Bouchereau, all the great physicians should be called in.

"But you will frighten him."

De Monpavon expanded his chest, the one pride of the old broken-down charger.

"*Mon cher,* if you had seen Mora and me in the trenches of Constantine—ps—ps. Never looked away. We don't know fear. Give notice to your colleagues. I undertake to inform him."

The consultation took place in the evening with great privacy, the duke having insisted on this from a singular sense of shame produced by his illness, by that suffering which discrowned him, making him the equal of other men. Like those African kings who hide themselves in the recesses of their palaces to die, he would have wished that men should believe him carried off, transfigured, become a god. Then, too, he dreaded above all things the expressions of pity, the condolences, the compassion with which he knew that his sick-bed would be surrounded; the tears because he suspected them to be hypocritical, and because, if sincere, they displeased him still more by their grimacing ugliness.

He had always detested scenes, exaggerated sentiments, everything that could move him to emotion or disturb the harmonious equilibrium of his life. Every one knew this, and the order was to keep away from him the distress, the misery, which from one end of France to the other flowed

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towards Mora as to one of those forest refuges lighted during the night at which all wanderers may knock. Not that he was hard to the unfortunate; perhaps he may have been too easily moved to the pity which he regarded as an inferior sentiment, a weakness unworthy of the strong, and, refusing it to others, he dreaded it for himself, for the integrity of his courage. Nobody in the palace, then, except Monpavon and Louis the *valet de chambre*, knew of the visit of those three personages introduced mysteriously into the Minister of State's apartments. The duchess herself was ignorant of it. Separated from her husband by the barriers frequently placed by the political and fashionable life of the great world between married people, she believed him slightly indisposed, nervous more than anything else; and had so little suspicion of a catastrophe that at the very hour when the doctors were mounting the great, dimly lit staircase at the other end of the palace, her private apartments were being lit up for a girls' dance, one of those *bals blancs* which the ingenuity of the idle world had begun to make fashionable in Paris.

This consultation was like all others: solemn and sinister. Doctors no longer wear their great periwigs of the time of Molière, but they still assume the same gravity of the priests of Isis, of astrologers bristling with cabalistic formulæ pronounced with sage noddings of the head, to which, for comical effect, there is only wanting the high pointed cap of former days. In this case the scene borrowed an imposing aspect from its setting. In the vast bed-chamber, transformed, heightened, as it were, in dignity by the immobility of the owner, these grave figures came forward round the bed on which the light was concentrated, illuminating amid the whiteness of the linen and the purple of the hangings a face worn into hollows, pale from lips to eyes, but wrapped in serenity as in a veil, as in a shroud. The consultants spoke in low tones, cast furtive glances at each other, or exchanged some barbarous word, remaining impassive, without even a frown. But this mute and reticent expression of the doctor and magistrate, this solemnity with which science and justice hedge themselves about to

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hide their frailty or ignorance, had no power to move the duke.

Sitting up in bed, he continued to talk quietly, with the upward glance of the eye in which it seems as if thought rises before it finally takes wing, and Monpavon coldly followed his cue, hardening himself against his own emotion, taking from his friend a last lesson in " form " ; while Louis, in the background, stood leaning against the door leading to the duchess's apartment, the spectre of a silent domestic in whom detached indifference is a duty.

The most agitated, nervous man present was Jenkins. Full of obsequious attentions for his " illustrious colleagues," as he called them, with his lips pursed up, he hung round their consultation and attempted to take part in it; but the colleagues kept him at a distance and hardly answered him, as Fagon—the Fagon of Louis XIV—might have addressed some empiric summoned to the royal bedside. Old Bouchereau especially had black looks for the inventor of the Jenkins pearls. Finally, when they had thoroughly examined and questioned their patient, they retired to deliberate among themselves in a little room with lacquered ceilings and walls, filled by an assortment of *bric-à-brac* the triviality of which contrasted strangely with the importance of the discussion.

Solemn moment! Anguish of the accused awaiting the decision of his judges—life, death, reprieve, or pardon!

With his long, white hand Mora continued to stroke his mustache with a favourite gesture, to talk with Monpavon of the club, of the foyer of the *Variétés*, asking news of the Chamber, how matters stood with regard to the Nabob's election—all this coldly, without the least affectation. Then, tired, no doubt, or fearing lest his glance, constantly drawn to that curtain opposite him, from behind which the sentence was to come presently, should betray the emotion which he must have felt in the depths of his soul, he laid his head on the pillow, closed his eyes, and did not open them again until the return of the doctors. Still the same cold and sinister faces, veritable physiognomies of judges having on their lips the terrible decree of human fate, the final word which

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the courts pronounce fearlessly, but which the doctors, whose science it mocks, elude, and express in periphrases.

"Well, gentlemen, what says the faculty?" demanded the sick man.

There were sundry murmurs of hypocritical encouragement, vague recommendations; then the three learned physicians hastened to depart, eager to escape from the responsibility of this disaster. Monpavon rushed after them. Jenkins remained at the bedside, overwhelmed by the cruel truths which he had just heard during the consultation. In vain had he laid his hand on his heart, quoted his famous motto; Bouchereau had not spared him. It was not the first of the Irishman's clients whom he had seen thus suddenly collapse; but he fervently hoped that the death of Mora would act as a salutary warning to the world of fashion, and that the prefect of police, after this great calamity, would send the "dealer in cantharides" to retail his drugs on the other side of the Channel.

The duke understood immediately that neither Jenkins nor Louis would tell him the true issue of the consultation. He abstained, therefore, from any insistence in his questionings of them, submitted to their pretended confidence, affected even to share it, to believe the most hopeful things they announced to him. But when Monpavon returned, he summoned him to his bedside, and, confronted by the lie visible even beneath the make-up of the decrepit old man, remarked:

"Oh, you know—no humbug! From you to me, truth. What do they say? I am in a very bad way, eh?"

Monpavon prefaced his reply with a significant silence; then brutally, cynically, for fear of breaking down as he spoke:

"Done for, my poor Augustus!"

The duke received the sentence full in the face without flinching.

"Ah!" he said simply.

He pulled his mustache with a mechanical gesture, but his features remained motionless. And immediately he made up his mind.

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That the poor wretch who dies in a hospital, without home or family, without other name than the number of his bed, that he should accept death as a deliverance or bear it as his last trial; that the old peasant who passes away, bent double, worn out, in his dark and smoky cellar, that he should depart without regret, savouring in advance the taste of that fresh earth which he has so many times dug over and over—that is intelligible. And yet how many, even among such, cling to existence despite all their misery! how many there are who cry, holding on to their sordid furniture and to their rags, "I don't want to die!" and depart with nails broken and bleeding from that supreme wrench. But here there was nothing of the kind.

To possess all, and to lose all. What a catastrophe!

In the first silence of that dreadful moment, while he heard the sound of the music coming faintly from the duchess's ball at the other end of the palace, whatever attached this man to life, power, honour, wealth, all that splendour must have seemed to him already far away and in an irrevocable past. A courage of a quite exceptional temper must have been required to bear up under such a blow without any spur of personal vanity. No one was present save the friend, the doctor, the servant, three intimates acquainted with all his secrets; the lights moved back, left the bed in shadow, and the dying man might quite well have turned his face to the wall in lamentation of his own fate without being noticed. But not an instant of weakness, nor of useless demonstration. Without breaking a branch of the chestnut-trees in the garden, without withering a flower on the great staircase of the palace, his footsteps muffled on the thick pile of the carpets, Death had opened the door of this man of power and signed to him "Come!" And he answered simply, "I am ready." The true exit of a man of the world, unforeseen, rapid, and discreet.

Man of the world! Mora was nothing if not that. Passing through life masked, gloved, breast-plated—breast-plate of white satin, such as the masters of fence wear on great days; preserving his fighting dress immaculate and clean; sacrificing everything to that irreproachable exterior which

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with him did duty for armour; he had determined on his *rôle* as statesman in the passage from the drawing-room to a wider scene, and made, indeed, a statesman of the first rank on the strength alone of his qualities as a man about town, the art of listening and of smiling, knowledge of men, scepticism, and coolness. That coolness did not leave him at the supreme moment.

With eyes fixed on the time, so short, which still remained to him—for the dark visitor was in a hurry, and he could feel on his face the draught from the door which he had not closed behind him—his one thought now was to occupy the time well, to satisfy all the obligations of an end like his, which must leave no devotion unrecompensed nor compromise any friend. He gave a list of certain persons whom he wished to see and who were sent for immediately, summoned the head of his cabinet, and, as Jenkins ventured the opinion that it was a great fatigue for him, said:

"Can you guarantee that I shall wake to-morrow morning? I feel strong at this moment; let me take advantage of it."

Louis inquired whether the duchess should be informed. The duke, before replying, listened to the sounds of music that reached his room through the open windows from the little ball, sounds that seemed prolonged in the night on an invisible bow, then answered:

"Let us wait a little. I have something to finish."

They brought to his bedside the little lacquered table that he might himself sort out the letters which were to be destroyed; but feeling his strength give way, he called Monpavon.

"Burn everything," said he to him in a faint voice; and seeing him move towards the fireplace, where a fire was burning despite the warmth of the season,

"No," he added, "not here. There are too many of them. Some one might come."

Monpavon took up the writing-table, which was not heavy, and signed to the *valet de chambre* to go before him with a light. But Jenkins sprang forward:

"Stay here, Louis; the duke may want you."

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He took hold of the lamp; and moving carefully down the whole length of the great corridor, exploring the waiting-rooms, the galleries, in which the fireplaces proved to be filled with artificial plants and quite emptied of ashes, they wandered like spectres in the silence and darkness of the vast house, alive only over yonder on the right, where pleasure was singing like a bird on a roof which is about to fall in ruins.

"There is no fire anywhere. What is to be done with all this?" they asked each other in great embarrassment. They might have been two thieves dragging away a chest which they did not know how to open. At last Monpavon, out of patience, walked straight to a door, the only one which they had not yet opened.

"*Ma foi,* so much the worse! Since we cannot burn them, we will drown them. Hold the light, Jenkins."

And they entered.

Where were they? Saint-Simon relating the downfall of one of those sovereign existences, the disarray of ceremonies, of dignities, of grandeurs, caused by death and especially by sudden death, only Saint-Simon might have found words to tell you. With his delicate, carefully kept hands, the Marquis de Monpavon did the pumping. The other passed to him the letters after tearing them into small pieces, packets of letters, on satin paper, tinted, perfumed, adorned with crests, coats of arms, small flags with devices, covered with handwritings, fine, hurried, scrawling, entwining, persuasive; and all those flimsy pages went whirling one over the other in eddying streams of water which crumpled them, soiled them, washed out their tender inks before allowing them to disappear with a gurgle down the drain.

They were love-letters and of every kind, from the note of the adventuress, "*I saw you pass yesterday in the Bois, M. le Duc,*" to the aristocratic reproaches of the last mistress but one, and the complaints of ladies deserted, and the page, still fresh, of recent confidences. Monpavon was in the secret of all these mysteries—put a name on each of them: "That is Mme. Moor. Hallo! Mme. d'Athis!" A confusion of coronets and initials, of caprices and old hab-

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its, sullied by the promiscuity of this moment, all engulfed in the horrid closet by the light of a lamp, with the noise of an intermittent gush of water, departing into oblivion by a shameful road. Suddenly Jenkins paused in his work of destruction. Two satin-gray letters trembled as he held them in his fingers.

"Who is that?" asked Monpavon, noticing the unfamiliar handwriting and the Irishman's nervous excitement. "Ah, doctor, if you want to read them all, we shall never have finished."

Jenkins, his cheeks flushed, the two letters in his hand, was consumed by a desire to carry them away, to pore over them at his ease, to martyrize himself with delight by reading them, perhaps also to forge out of this correspondence a weapon for himself against the imprudent woman who had signed her name. But the rigorous correctness of the marquis made him afraid. How could he distract his attention—get him away? The opportunity occurred of its own accord. Among the letters, a tiny page written in a senile and shaky hand, caught the attention of the charlatan, who said with an ingenuous air: "Oh, oh! here is something that does not look much like a *billet-doux*. '*Mon Duc, to the rescue—I am sinking! The Court of Exchequer has once more stuck its nose into my affairs.*'"

"What are you reading there?" exclaimed Monpavon abruptly, snatching the letter from his hands. And immediately, thanks to Mora's negligence in thus allowing such private letters to lie about, the terrible situation in which he would be left by the death of his protector returned to his mind. In his grief, he had not yet given it a thought. He told himself that in the midst of all his preparations for his departure, the duke might quite possibly overlook him; and, leaving Jenkins to complete the drowning of Don Juan's casket by himself, he returned precipitately in the direction of the bed-chamber. Just as he was on the point of entering, the sound of a discussion held him back behind the lowered door-curtain. It was Louis's voice, tearful like that of a beggar in a church-porch, trying to move the duke to pity for his distress, and asking permission to take certain

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bundles of bank-notes that lay in a drawer. Oh, how hoarse, utterly wearied, hardly intelligible the answer, in which there could be detected the effort of the sick man to turn over in his bed, to bring back his vision from a far-off distance already half in sight:

"Yes, yes; take them. But, for God's sake, let me sleep—let me sleep!"

Drawers opened, closed again, a short and panting breath. Monpavon heard no more of what was going on, and retraced his steps without entering. The ferocious rapacity of this servant had set his pride upon its guard. Anything rather than degradation to such a point as that.

The sleep which Mora craved for so insistently—the lethargy, to be more accurate—lasted a whole night, and through the next morning also, with uncertain wakings disturbed by terrible sufferings relieved each time by soporifics. No further attempt was made to nurse him to recovery; they tried only to soothe his last moments, to help him to slip painlessly over that terrible last step. His eyes had opened again during this time, but were already dimmed, fixed in the void on floating shadows, vague forms, like those a diver sees quivering in the uncertain light under water.

In the afternoon of the Thursday, towards three o'clock, he regained complete consciousness, and recognising Monpavon, Cardailhac, and two or three other intimate friends, he smiled to them, and betrayed in a sentence his only anxiety:

"What do they say about it in Paris?"

They said many things about it, different and contradictory; but very certainly he was the only subject of conversation, and the news spread through the town since the morning, that Mora was at his last breath, agitated the streets, the drawing-rooms, the cafés, the workshops, revived the question of the political situation in newspaper offices and clubs, even in porters' lodges and on the tops of omnibuses, in every place where the unfolded public newspapers commented on this startling rumour of the day.

Mora was the most brilliant incarnation of the Empire. One sees from a distance, not the solid or insecure base of

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the building, but the gilded and delicate spire, embellished, carved into hollow tracery, added for the satisfaction of the age. Mora was what was seen in France and throughout Europe of the Empire. If he fell, the monument would find itself bereft of all its elegance, split as by some long and irreparable crack. And how many lives would be dragged down by that sudden fall, how many fortunes undermined by the weakened reverberations of the catastrophe! None so completely as that of the big man sitting motionless downstairs, on the bench in the monkey-house.

For the Nabob, this death was his own death, the ruin, the end of all things. He was so deeply conscious of it that, when he entered the house, on learning the hopeless condition of the duke, no expression of pity, no regrets of any sort, had escaped him, only the ferocious word of human egoism, "I am ruined!" And this word kept recurring to his lips; he repeated it mechanically each time that he awoke suddenly afresh to all the horror of his situation, as in those dangerous mountain storms, when a sudden flash of lightning illumines the abyss to its depths, showing the wounding spurs and the bushes on its sides, ready to tear and scratch the man who should fall.

The rapid clairvoyance which accompanies cataclysms spared him no detail. He saw the invalidation of his election almost certain, now that Mora would no longer be there to plead his cause; then the consequences of the defeat—bankruptcy, poverty, and still worse; for when these incalculable riches collapse they always bury a little of a man's honour beneath their ruins. But how many briers, how many thorns, how many cruel scratches and wounds before arriving at the end! In a week there would be the Schwalbach bills—that is to say, eight hundred thousand francs—to pay; indemnity for Moëssard, who wanted a hundred thousand francs, or as the alternative he would apply for the permission of the Chamber to prosecute him for a misdemeanour, a suit still more sinister instituted by the families of two little martyrs of Bethlehem against the founders of the Society; and, on top of all, the complications of the Territorial Bank. There was one solitary hope, the mission

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of Paul de Géry to the Bey, but so vague, so chimerical, so remote!

"Ah, I am ruined! I am ruined!"

In the immense entrance-hall no one noticed his distress. The crowd of senators, of deputies, of councillors of state, all the high officials of the administration, came and went around him without seeing him, holding mysterious consultations with uneasy importance near the two fireplaces of white marble which faced one another. So many ambitions disappointed, deceived, hurled down, met in this visit *in extremis*, that personal anxieties dominated every other preoccupation.

The faces, strangely enough, expressed neither pity nor grief, rather a sort of anger. All these people seemed to have a grudge against tthe duke for dying, as though he had deserted them. One heard remarks of this kind: "It is not surprising, with such a life as he has lived!" And looking out of the high windows, these gentlemen pointed out to each other, amid the going and coming of the equipages in the court-yard, the drawing up of some little brougham from within which a well-gloved hand, with its lace sleeve brushing the sash of the door, would hold out a card with a corner turned back to the footman.

From time to time one of the *habitués* of the palace, one of those whom the dying man had summoned to his bedside, appeared in the medley, gave an order, then went away, leaving the scared expression of his face reflected on twenty others. Jenkins showed himself thus for a moment, with his cravat untied, his waistcoat unbuttoned, his cuffs crumpled, in all the disorder of the battle in which he was engaged upstairs against a terrible opponent. He was instantly surrounded, besieged with questions.

Certainly the monkeys flattening their short noses against the bars of their cage, excited by the unaccustomed tumult, and very attentive to all that passed about them as though they were occupied in making a methodical study of human hypocrisy, had a magnificent model in the Irish physician. His grief was superb, a splendid grief, masculine and strong, which compressed his lips and made him pant.

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"The agony has begun," he said mournfully. "It is now only a matter of hours."

And as Jansoulet came towards him, he said to him emphatically:

"Ah, my friend, what a man! What courage! He has forgotten nobody. Only just now he was speaking to me of you."

"Really?"

"'The poor Nabob,' said he, 'how does the affair of his election stand?'"

And that was all. The duke had added no further word.

Jansoulet bowed his head. What had he been hoping? Was it not enough that at such a moment a man like Mora had given him a thought? He returned and sat down on his bench, falling back into the stupor which had been galvanized by one moment of mad hope, and remained until, without his noticing it, the hall had become nearly deserted. He did not remark that he was the only and last visitor left, until he heard the men-servants talking aloud in the waning light of the evening:

"For my part, I've had enough of it. I shall leave service."

"I shall stay on with the duchess."

And these projects, these arrangements some hours in advance of death, condemned the noble duke still more surely than the faculty.

The Nabob understood then that it was time for him to go, but, first, he wished to inscribe his name in the visitors' book kept by the porter. He went up to the table, and leaned over it to see distinctly. The page was full. A blank space was pointed out to him below a signature in a very small, spidery hand, such as is frequently written by very fat fingers, and when he had signed, it proved to be the name of Hemerlingue dominating his own, crushing it, clasping it round with an insidious flourish. Superstitious, like the true Latin he was, he was struck by this omen, and went away frightened by it.

Where should he dine? At the club? Place Vendôme? To hear still more talk of this death that obsessed him! He

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preferred to go somewhere by chance, walking straight before him, like all those who are a prey to some fixed idea which they hope to conjure away by rapid movement. The evening was warm, the air full of sweet scents. He walked along the quays, and reached the trees of the Cours-la-Reine, then found himself breathing that air in which is mingled the freshness of watered roads and the odour of fine dust so characteristic of summer evenings in Paris. At that hour all was deserted. Here and there chandeliers were being lighted for the concerts, blazes of gaslight flared among the green trees. A sound of glasses and plates from a restaurant gave him the idea of going in.

The strong man was hungry despite all his troubles. He was served under a veranda with glazed walls backed by shrubs, and facing the great porch of the Palais de l'Industrie, where the duke, in the presence of a thousand people, had greeted him as a deputy. The refined, aristocratic face rose before his memory in the darkness of the sky, while he could see it also as it lay over yonder on the funereal whiteness of the pillow; and suddenly, as he ran his eye over the bill of fare presented to him by the waiter, he noticed with stupefaction that it bore the date of the 20th of May. So a month had not elapsed since the opening of the exhibition. It seemed to him like ten years ago. Gradually, however, the warmth of the meal cheered him. In the corridor he could hear waiters talking:

"Has anybody heard news of Mora? It appears he is very ill."

"Nonsense! He will get over it, you will see. Men like him get all the luck."

And so deeply is hope implanted in the human soul, that, despite what Jansoulet had himself seen and heard, these few words, helped by two bottles of burgundy and a few glasses of cognac, sufficed to restore his courage. After all, people had been known to recover from illnesses quite as desperate. Doctors often exaggerate the ill in order to get more credit afterward for curing it. "Suppose I called to inquire." He made his way back towards the house, full of illusion, trusting to that chance which had served him

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so many times in his life. And indeed the aspect of the princely abode had something about it to fortify his hope. It presented the reassuring and tranquil appearance of ordinary evenings, from the avenue with its lights at long intervals, majestic and deserted, to the steps where stood waiting a huge carriage of old-fashioned shape.

In the antechamber, peaceful also, two enormous lamps were burning. A footman slept in a corner; the porter was reading before the fireplace. He looked at the new arrival over his spectacles, made no remark, and Jansoulet dared ask no question. Piles of newspapers lying on the table in their wrappers, addressed to the duke, seemed to have been thrown there as useless. The Nabob took up one of them, opened it, and tried to read, but quick and gliding steps, a muttered chanting, made him lift his eyes, and he saw a white-haired and bent old man, decked out in lace as though he had been an altar, who was praying aloud as he departed with long priestly stride, his ample red cassock spreading in a train over the carpet. It was the Archbishop of Paris, accompanied by two assistants. The vision, with its murmur as of an icy north wind, passed quickly before Jansoulet, plunged into the great carriage and disappeared, carrying away with it his last hope.

"Doing the right thing, *mon cher*," remarked Monpavon, appearing suddenly at his side. "Mora is an epicurean, brought up in the ideas of how do you say—you know—what is it you call it? Eighteenth century. Very bad for the masses, if a man in his position—ps—ps—ps—Ah, he is the master who sets us all an example—ps—ps—irreproachable manners!"

"Then, it is all over?" said Jansoulet, overwhelmed. "There is no longer any hope?"

Monpavon signed to him to listen. A carriage rolled heavily along the avenue on the quay. The visitors' bell rang sharply several times in succession. The marquis counted aloud: "One, two, three, four." At the fifth he rose:

"No more hope now. Here comes the other," said he, alluding to the Parisian superstition that a visit from the

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sovereign was always fatal to dying persons. From every side the lackeys hastened up, opened the doors wide, ranged themselves in line, while the porter, his hat cocked forward and his staff resounding on the marble floor, announced the passage of two august shadows, of whom Jansoulet only caught a confused glimpse behind the liveried domestics, but whom he saw beyond a long perspective of open doors climbing the great staircase, preceded by a footman bearing a candelabrum. The woman ascended, erect and proud, enveloped in a black Spanish mantilla; the man supported himself by the baluster, slower in his movements and tired, the collar of his light overcoat turned up above a rather bent back, which was shaken by a convulsive sob.

"Let us be off, Nabob. Nothing more to be done here," said the old beau, taking Jansoulet by the arm and drawing him outside. He paused on the threshold, with raised hand, making a little gesture of farewell in the direction of the man who lay dying upstairs. "Good-bye, old fellow!" The gesture and the tone were polite, irreproachable, but the voice trembled a little.

The club in the Rue Royale, which was famous for its gambling parties, rarely saw one so desperate as the gaming of that night. It commenced at eleven o'clock and was still going on at five in the morning. Enormous sums were scattered over the green cloth, changing hands, moved now to one side, now to the other, heaped up, distributed, regained. Fortunes were engulfed in this monster play, at the end of which the Nabob, who had started it to forget his terrors in the hazards of chance, after singular alternations and runs of luck enough to turn the hair of a beginner white, retired with winnings amounting to five hundred thousand francs. On the boulevard the next day they said five millions, and everybody cried out on the scandal, especially the *Messenger,* three-quarters filled by an article against certain adventurers tolerated in the clubs, and who cause the ruin of the most honourable families.

Alas! what Jansoulet had won hardly represented enough to meet the first Schwalbach bills.

During this wild play, of which Mora was, however,

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the involuntary cause, and, as it were, the soul, his name was not once uttered. Neither Cardailhac nor Jenkins put in an appearance. Monpavon had taken to his bed, stricken more deeply than he wished it to be thought. Nobody had any news.

"Is he dead?" Jansoulet said to himself as he left the club; and he felt a desire to make a call to inquire before going home. It was no longer hope that urged him, but that sort of morbid and nervous curiosity which after a great fire leads the smitten unfortunate people, ruined and homeless, back to the wreck of their dwellings.

Although it was still very early, and a pink mist of dawn hung in the sky, the whole mansion stood open as if for a solemn departure. The lamps still smoked over the fireplaces, dust floated about the rooms. The Nabob advanced amid an inexplicable solitude of desertion to the first floor, where at last he heard a voice he knew, that of Cardailhac, who was dictating names, and the scratching of pens over paper. The clever stage-manager of the festivities in honour of the Bey was organizing with the same ardour the funeral pomps of the Duc de Mora. What activity! His excellency had died during the evening; when morning came already ten thousand letters were being printed, and everybody in the house who could hold a pen was busy with the writing of the addresses. Without passing through these improvised offices, Jansoulet reached the waiting-room, ordinarily so crowded, to-day with all its arm-chairs empty. In the middle, on a table, lay the hat, cane, and gloves of M. le Duc, always ready in case he should go out unexpectedly, so as to save him even the trouble of giving an order. The objects that we always wear keep about them something of ourselves. The curve of the hat suggested that of the mustache; the light-coloured gloves were ready to grasp the supple and strong Chinese cane; the total effect was one of life and energy, as if the duke were about to appear, stretch out his hand while talking, take up those things, and go out.

Oh, no. M. le Duc was not going out. Jansoulet had but to approach the half-open door of the bed-chamber to

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see on the bed, raised three steps—always the platform even after death—a rigid, haughty form, a motionless and aged profile, metamorphosed by the beard's growth of a night, quite gray; near the sloping pillow, kneeling and burying her head in the white drapery, was a woman, whose fair hair lay in rippled disorder, ready to fall beneath the shears of eternal widowhood; then a priest and a nun, gathered in this atmosphere of watch by the dead, in which are mingled the fatigue of sleepless nights and the murmurs of prayer.

The chamber in which so many ambitions had strengthened their wings, so many hopes and disappointments had throbbed, was wholly given over now to the peace of passing Death. Not a sound, not a sigh. Only, notwithstanding the early hour, away yonder, towards the Pont de la Concorde, a little clarinet, shrill and sharp, could be heard above the rumbling of the first vehicles; but its exasperating mockery was henceforth lost on him who lay there asleep, showing to the terrified Nabob an image of his own destiny, chilled, discoloured, ready for the tomb.

Others besides Jansoulet found that death-chamber lugubrious: the windows wide open, the night and the wind entering freely from the garden, making a strong draught; a human form on a table; the body, which had just been embalmed; the hollow skull filled with a sponge, the brain in a basin. The weight of this brain of a statesman was truly extraordinary. It weighed—it weighed—the newspapers of the period mentioned the figure. But who remembers it to-day?

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XIX

THE FUNERAL

"DON'T weep, my fairy, you rob me of all my courage. Come, you will be a great deal happier when you no longer have your terrible demon. You will go back to Fontainebleau and look after your chickens. The ten thousand francs from Brahim will help to get you settled down. And then, don't be afraid, once you are over there I shall send you money. Since this Bey wants to have sculpture done by me, he will have to pay for it, as you may imagine. I shall return rich, rich. Who knows? Perhaps a sultana."

"Yes, you will be a sultana, but I—I shall be dead and I shall never see you again." And the good Crenmitz in despair huddled herself into a corner of the cab so that she should not be seen weeping.

Félicia was leaving Paris. She was trying to escape the horrible sadness, the sinister disgust into which Mora's death had thrown her. What a terrible blow for the proud girl! *Ennui*, pique, had thrown her into this man's arms; she had given him pride—modesty—all; and now he had carried all away with him, leaving her tarnished for life, a tearless widow, without mourning and without dignity. Two or three visits to Saint-James Villa, a few evenings in the back of a box at some small theatre, behind the curtain that shelters forbidden and shameful pleasure, these were the only memories left to her by this liaison of a fortnight, this loveless intrigue wherein her pride had not found even the satisfaction of the commotion caused by a big scandal. The useless and indelible stain, the stupid fall of a woman who does not know how to walk and who is embarrassed in her rising by the ironical pity of the passers-by.

For a moment she thought of suicide, then the reflection

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that it would be set down to a broken heart arrested her. She saw in a glance the sentimental compassion of the drawing-rooms, the foolish figure that her sham passion would cut among the innumerable love affairs of the duke, and the Parma violets scattered by the pretty Moëssards of journalism on her grave, dug so near the other. Travelling remained to her—one of those journeys so distant that they take even one's thoughts into a new world. Unfortunately the money was wanting. Then she remembered that on the morrow of her great success at the Exhibition, old Brahim Bey had called to see her, to make her, in behalf of his master, magnificent proposals for certain great works to be executed in Tunis. She had said No at the time, without allowing herself to be tempted by Oriental remuneration, a splendid hospitality, the finest court in the Bardo for a studio, with its surrounding arcades of stone in lacework carving. But now she was quite willing. She had to make but a sign, the agreement was immediately concluded, and after an exchange of telegrams, a hasty packing and shutting up of the house, she set out for the railway station as if for a week's absence, astonished herself by her prompt decision, flattered on all the adventurous and artistic sides of her nature by the hope of a new life in an unknown country.

The Bey's pleasure yacht was to await her at Genoa; and in anticipation, closing her eyes in the cab which was taking her to the station, she could see the white stone buildings of an Italian port embracing an iridescent sea where the sunshine was already Eastern, where everything sang, to the very swelling of the sails on the blue water. Paris, as it happened, was muddy that day, uniformly gray, flooded by one of those continuous rains of which it seems to have the special property, rains that seem to have risen in clouds from its river, from its smoke, from its monster's breath, and to fall in torrents from its roofs, from its spouts, from the innumerable windows of its garrets. Félicia was impatient to get away from this gloomy Paris, and her feverish impatience found fault with the cabman who made slow progress with the horses, two sorry creatures of the veritable cab-horse type, with an inexplicable block of carriages and

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omnibuses crowded together in the vicinity of the Pont de la Concorde.

"But go on, driver, go on, then."

"I cannot, madame. It is the funeral procession."

She put her head out of the window and drew it back again immediately, terrified. A line of soldiers marching with reversed arms, a confusion of caps and hats raised from the forehead at the passage of an endless cortège. It was Mora's funeral procession defiling past.

"Don't stop here. Go round," she cried to the cabman.

The vehicle turned about with difficulty, dragging itself regretfully from the superb spectacle which Paris had been awaiting for four days; it remounted the avenues, took the Rue Montaigne, and, with its slow and surly little trot, came out at the Madeleine by the Boulevard Malesherbes. Here the crowd was greater, more compact.

In the misty rain, the illuminated stained-glass windows of the church, the dull echo of the funeral chants beneath the lavishly distributed black hangings under which the very outline of the Greek temple was lost, filled the whole square with a sense of the office in course of celebration, while the greater part of the immense procession was still squeezed up in the Rue Royale, and as far even as the bridges a long black line connecting the dead man with that gate of the Legislative Assembly through which he had so often passed. Beyond the Madeleine the highway of the boulevard stretched away empty, and looking bigger between two lines of soldiers with arms reversed, confining the curious to the pavements black with people, all the shops closed, and the balconies, in spite of the rain, overflowing with human beings all leaning forward in the direction of the church, as if to see a mid-Lent festival or the home-coming of victorious troops. Paris, hungry for the spectacular, constructs it indifferently out of anything, civil war as readily as the burial of a statesman.

It was necessary for the cab to retrace its course again and to make a new circuit; and it is easy to imagine the bad temper of the driver and his beasts, all three of them Parisian in soul and passions, at having to deprive themselves

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of so fine a show. Then, as all the life of Paris had been drawn into the great artery of the boulevard, there began through the deserted and silent streets—a capricious and irregular drive—the snail-like progress of a cab taken by the hour. First touching the extreme points of the Faubourg Saint-Martin and the Faubourg Saint-Denis, returning again towards the centre, and at the conclusion of circuits and dodges finding always the same obstacle in ambush, the same crowd, some fragment of the black defile perceived for a moment at the branching of a street, unfolding itself in the rain to the sound of muffled drums—a dull and heavy sound, like that of earth falling on a coffin-lid.

What torture for Félicia! It was her weakness and her remorse crossing Paris in this solemn pomp, this funeral train, this public mourning reflected by the very clouds; and the proud girl revolted against this affront done her by fate, and tried to escape from it to the back of the carriage, where she remained exhausted with eyes closed, while old Crenmitz, believing her nervousness to be grief, did her best to comfort her, herself wept over their separation, and hiding also, left the entire window of the cab to the big Algerian hound with his finely modelled head scenting the wind, and his two paws resting in the sash with an heraldic stiffness of pose. Finally, after a thousand interminable windings, the cab suddenly came to a halt, jolted on again with difficulty amid cries and abuse, then, tossed about, the luggage on top threatening its equilibrium, it ended by coming to a full stop, held prisoner, as it were, at anchor.

"*Bon Dieu!* what a mass of people!" murmured the Crenmitz, terrified.

Félicia came out of her stupor.

"Where are we?"

Under a colourless, smoky sky, blotted out by a fine network of rain and stretched like gauze over everything, there lay an immense space filled by an ocean of humanity surging from all the streets that led to it, and motionless around a lofty column of bronze, which dominated this sea like the gigantic mast of a sunken vessel. Cavalry in squadrons, with swords drawn, guns in batteries stood at intervals along

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an open passage, awaiting him who was to come by, perhaps in order to try to retake him, to carry him off by force from the formidable enemy who was bearing him away. Alas! all the cavalry charges, all the guns could be of no avail here. The prisoner was departing, firmly guarded, defended by a triple wall of hardwood, metal, and velvet, impervious to grape-shot; and it was not from those soldiers that he could hope for his deliverance.

" Get away from this. I will not stay here," said Félicia, furious, plucking at the wet box-coat of the driver, and seized by a wild dread at the thought of the nightmare which was pursuing her, of *that* which she could hear coming in a frightful rumbling, still distant, but growing nearer from minute to minute. At the first movement of the wheels, however, the cries and shouts broke out anew. Thinking that he would be allowed to cross the square, the driver had penetrated with great difficulty to the front ranks of the crowd; it now closed behind him and refused to allow him to go forward. There they had to remain, to endure those odours of common people and of alcohol, those curious glances, already fired by the prospect of an exceptional spectacle. They stared rudely at the beautiful traveller who was starting off with so many trunks, and a dog of such a size for her defender. Crenmitz was horribly afraid; Félicia, for her part, could think of only one thing, and that was that *he* was about to pass before her eyes, that she would be in the front rank to see him.

Suddenly a great shout " Here it comes! " Then silence fell on the whole square at last at the end of three weary hours of waiting.

It came.

Félicia's first impulse was to lower the blind on her side, on the side past which the procession was about to pass. But at the rolling of the drums close at hand, seized by a nervous wrath at her inability to escape the obsession of the thing, perhaps also infected by the morbid curiosity around her, she suddenly let the blind fly up, and her pale and passionate little face showed itself at the window, supported by her two clinched hands.

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"There! since you will have it: I am watching you."

As a funeral it was as fine a thing as can be seen, the supreme honours rendered in all their vain splendour, as sonorous, as hollow as the rhythmic accompaniment on the muffled drums. First the white surplices of the clergy, amid the mourning drapery of the first five carriages; next, drawn by six black horses, veritable horses of Erebus, there advanced the funeral car, all beplumed, fringed and embroidered in silver, with big tears, heraldic coronets surmounting gigantic M's, prophetic initials which seemed those of Death himself, *La Mort* made a duchess decorated with the eight waving plumes. So many canopies and massive hangings hid the vulgar body of the hearse, as it trembled and quivered at each step from top to bottom as though crushed beneath the majesty of its dead burden. On the coffin, the sword, the coat, the embroidered hat, parade undress—which had never been worn—shone with gold and mother-of-pearl in the darkened little tent formed by the hangings and among the bright tints of fresh flowers telling of spring in spite of the sullenness of the sky. At a distance of ten paces came the household servants of the duke; then, behind, in majestic isolation, the cloaked officer bearing the emblems of honour—a veritable display of all the orders of the whole world—crosses, multicoloured ribbons, which covered to overflowing the cushion of black velvet with silver fringe.

The master of ceremonies came next, in front of the representatives of the Legislative Assembly—a dozen deputies chosen by lot, among them the tall figure of the Nabob, wearing the official costume for the first time, as if ironical Fortune had desired to give to the representative on probation a foretaste of all parliamentary joys. The friends of the dead man, who followed, formed a rather small group, singularly well chosen to exhibit in its crudity the superficiality and the void of that existence of a great personage reduced to the intimacy of a theatrical manager thrice bankrupt, of a picture-dealer grown wealthy through usury, of a nobleman of tarnished reputation, and of a few men about town without distinction. Up to this point everybody was walking on foot and bareheaded; among the parliamentary

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representatives there were only a few black skull-caps, which had been put on timidly as they approached the populous districts. After them the carriages began.

At the death of a great warrior it is the custom for the funeral convoy to be followed by the favourite horse of the hero, his battle charger, regulating to the slow step of the procession that dancing step excited by the smell of powder and the pageantry of standards. In this case, Mora's great brougham, that " C-spring " which used to bear him to fashionable or political gatherings, took the place of that companion in victory, its panels draped with black, its lamps veiled in long streamers of light crape, floating to the ground with undulating feminine grace. These veiled lamps constituted a new fashion for funerals—the supreme " chic " of mourning; and it well became this dandy to give a last lesson in elegance to the Parisians, who flocked to his obsequies as to a " Longchamps " of death.

Three more masters of ceremony; then came the impassive official procession, always the same for marriages, deaths, baptisms, openings of Parliament, or receptions of sovereigns, the interminable cortège of glittering carriages, with large windows and showy liveries bedizened with gilt, which passed through the midst of the dazzled people, to whom they recalled fairy-tales, Cinderella chariots, while evoking those " Oh's! " of admiration that mount and die away with the rockets on the evenings of firework displays. And in the crowd there was always to be found some good-natured policeman, some learned little grocer sauntering round on the lookout for public ceremonies, ready to name in a loud voice all the people in the carriages, as they defiled past, with their regulation escorts of dragoons, cuirassiers, or Paris guards.

First the representatives of the Emperor, the Empress and all the Imperial family; after these, in an hierarchic order, cunningly elaborated, and the least infraction of which might have been the cause of grave conflicts between the various departments of the State—the members of the Privy Council, the Marshals, the Admirals, the High Chancellor of the Legion of Honour; then the Senate, the Legis-

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lative Assembly, the Council of State, the whole organization of the law and of the university, the costumes, the ermine, the headgear of which took you back to the days of old Paris—an air of something stately and antiquated, out of date in our sceptical epoch of the workman's blouse and the dress-coat.

Félicia, to avoid her thoughts, voluntarily fixed her eyes upon this monotonous defile, exasperating in its length; and little by little a torpor stole over her, as if on a rainy day she had been turning over the leaves of an album of engravings, a history of official costumes from the most remote times down to our own day. All these people, seen in profile, still and upright, behind the large glass panes of the carriage windows, had indeed the appearance of personages in coloured plates, sitting well forward on the edge of the seats in order that the spectators should miss nothing of their golden embroideries, their palm-leaves, their galloons, their braids—puppets given over to the curiosity of the crowd—and exposing themselves to it with an air of indifference and detachment.

Indifference! That was the most special characteristic of this funeral. It was to be felt everywhere, on people's faces and in their hearts, as well among these functionaries of whom the greater part had only known the duke by sight, as in the ranks on foot between his hearse and his brougham, his closest friends, or those who had been in daily attendance upon him. The fat minister, Vice-President of the Council, seemed indifferent, and even glad, as he held in his powerful fist the strings of the pall and seemed to draw it forward, in more haste than the horses and the hearse to conduct to his six feet of earth the enemy of twenty years' standing, the eternal rival, the obstacle to all his ambitions. The other three dignitaries did not advance with the same vigour, and the long cords floated loosely in their weary or careless hands with significant slackness. The priests were indifferent by profession. Indifferent were the servants of his household, whom he never called anything but "*chose*," and whom he treated really like "things." Indifferent was M. Louis, for whom it was the last day of

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servitude, a slave become emancipated, rich enough to enjoy his ransom. Even among the intimate friends of the dead man this glacial cold had penetrated. Yet some of them had been deeply attached to him. But Cardailhac was too busy superintending the order and the progress of the procession to give way to the least emotion, which would, besides, have been foreign to his nature. Old Monpavon, stricken to the heart, would have considered the least bending of his linen cuirass and of his tall figure a piece of deplorably bad taste, totally unworthy of his illustrious friend. His eyes remained as dry and glittering as ever, since the undertakers provide the tears for great mournings, embroidered in silver on black cloth. Some one was weeping, however, away yonder among the members of the committee; but he was expending his compassion very naïvely upon himself. Poor Nabob! softened by that music and splendour, it seemed to him that he was burying all his ambitions of glory and dignity. And his was but one more variety of indifference.

Among the public, the enjoyment of a fine spectacle, the pleasure of turning a week-day into a Sunday, dominated every other sentiment. Along the line of the boulevards, the spectators on the balconies almost seemed disposed to applaud; here, in the populous districts, irreverence was still more frankly manifest. Jests, blackguardly wit at the expense of the dead man and his doings, known to all Paris, laughter raised by the tall hats of the rabbis, the pass-word of the council experts, all were heard in the air between two rolls of the drum. Poverty, forced labour, with its feet in the wet, wearing its blouse, its apron, its cap raised from habit, with sneering chuckle watched this inhabitant of another sphere pass by, this brilliant duke, severed now from all his honours, who perhaps while living had never paid a visit to that end of the town. But there it is. To arrive up yonder, where everybody has to go, the common route must be taken, the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, the Rue de la Roquette as far as that great gate where the *octroi* is collected and the infinite begins. And well! it does one good to see that lordly persons like Mora, dukes, ministers, follow the same road towards the same destination. This

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equality in death consoles for many of the injustices of life. To-morrow bread will seem less dear, wine better, the workman's tool less heavy, when he will be able to say to himself as he rises in the morning, "That old Mora, he has come to it like the rest!"

The procession still went on, more fatiguing even than lugubrious. Now it consisted of choral societies, deputations from the army and the navy, officers of all descriptions, pressing on in a troop in advance of a long file of empty vehicles—mourning-coaches, private carriages—present for reasons of etiquette. Then the troops followed in their turn, and into the sordid suburb, that long Rue de la Roquette, already swarming with people as far as eye could reach, there plunged a whole army, foot-soldiers, dragoons, lancers, carabineers, heavy guns with their great mouths in the air, ready to bark, making pavement and windows tremble, but not able to drown the rolling of the drums—a sinister and savage rolling which suggested to Félicia's imagination some funeral of an African chief, at which thousands of sacrificed victims accompany the soul of a prince so that it shall not pass alone into the kingdom of spirits, and made her fancy that perhaps this pompous and interminable retinue was about to descend and disappear in the superhuman grave large enough to receive the whole of it.

"*Now and in the hour of our death. Amen,*" Crenmitz murmured, while the cab swayed from side to side in the lighted square, and high in space the golden statue of Liberty seemed to be taking a magic flight; and the old dancer's prayer was perhaps the one note of sincere feeling called forth on the immense line of the funeral procession.

All the speeches are over; three long speeches as icy as the vault into which the dead man has just descended, three official declamations which, above all, have provided the orators with an opportunity of giving loud voice to their own devotion to the interests of the dynasty. Fifteen times the guns have roused the many echoes of the cemetery, shaken the wreaths of jet and everlasting flowers—the light *ex-voto* offerings suspended at the corners of the monuments —and while a reddish mist floats and rolls with a smell of

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gunpowder across the city of the dead, ascends and mingles slowly with the smoke of factories in the plebeian district, the innumerable assembly disperses also, scattered through the steep streets, down the lofty steps all white among the foliage, with a confused murmur, a rippling as of waves over rocks. Purple robes, black robes, blue and green coats, shoulder-knots of gold, slender swords, of whose safety the wearers assure themselves with their hands as they walk, all hasten to regain their carriages. People exchange low bows, discreet smiles, while the mourning-coaches tear down the carriage-ways at a gallop, revealing long lines of black coachmen, with backs bent, hats tilted forward, the box-coats flying in the wind made by their rapid motion.

The general impression is one of thankfulness to have reached the end of a long and fatiguing performance, a legitimate eagerness to quit the administrative harness and ceremonial costumes, to unbuckle sashes, to loosen stand-up collars and neckbands, to slacken the tension of facial muscles, which had been subject to long restraint.

Heavy and short, dragging along his swollen legs with difficulty, Hemerlingue was hastening towards the exit, declining the offers which were made to him of a seat in this or that carriage, since he knew well that his own alone was of size adequate to cope with his proportions.

"Baron, Baron, this way. There is room for you."

"No, thank you. I want to walk to straighten my legs."

And to avoid these invitations, which were beginning to embarrass him, he took an almost deserted pathway, one that proved too deserted indeed, for hardly had he taken a step along it before he regretted it. Ever since entering the cemetery he had had but one preoccupation—the fear of finding himself face to face with Jansoulet, whose violence of temper he knew, and who might well forget the sacredness of the place, and even in Père Lachaise renew the scandal of the Rue Royale. Two or three times during the ceremony he had seen the great head of his old chum emerge from among the crowd of insignificant types which largely composed the company and move in his direction,

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as though seeking him and desiring a meeting. Down there, in the main road, there would, at any rate, have been people about in case of trouble, while here—Brr— It was this anxiety that made him quicken his short step, his panting breaths, but in vain. As he looked round, in his fear of being followed, the strong, erect shoulders of the Nabob appeared at the entrance to the path. Impossible for the big man to slip away through one of the narrow passages left between the tombs, which are placed so close together that there is not even space to kneel. The damp, rich soil slipped and gave way beneath his feet. He decided to walk on with an air of indifference, hoping that perhaps the other might not recognise him. But a hoarse and powerful voice cried behind him:

"Lazarus!"

His name—the name of this rich man—was Lazarus. He made no reply, but tried to catch up a group of officers who were moving on, very far in front of him.

"Lazarus! Oh, Lazarus!"

Just as in old times on the quay of Marseilles. Under the influence of old habit he was tempted to stop; then the remembrance of his infamies, of all the ill he had done the Nabob, that he was still occupied in doing him, came back to him suddenly with a horrible fear so strong that it amounted to a paroxysm, when an iron hand laid hold of him unceremoniously. A sweat of terror broke out over all his flabby limbs, his face became still more yellow, his eyes blinked in anticipation of the formidable blow which he expected to come, while his fat arms were instinctively raised to ward it off.

"Oh, don't be afraid. I wish you no harm," said Jansoulet sadly. "Only I have come to beg you to do no more to me."

He stooped to breathe. The banker, bewildered and frightened, opened wide his round owl's eyes in presence of this suffocating emotion.

"Listen, Lazarus; it is you who are the stronger in this war we have been waging on each other for so long. I am down; yes, down. My shoulders have touched the ground.

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Now, be generous; spare your old chum. Give me quarter; come, give me quarter."

This southerner was trembling, defeated and softened by the emotional display of the funeral ceremony. Hemerlingue, as he stood facing him, was hardly more courageous. The gloomy music, the open grave, the speeches, the cannonade of that lofty philosophy of inevitable death, all these things had worked on the feelings of this fat baron. The voice of his old comrade completed the awakening of whatever there remained of human in that packet of gelatine.

His old chum! It was the first time for ten years—since their quarrel—that he had seen him so near. How many things were recalled to him by those sun-tanned features, those broad shoulders, so ill adapted for the wearing of embroidered coats! The thin woollen rug full of holes, in which they used to wrap themselves both to sleep on the bridge of the *Sinai*, the food shared in brotherly fashion, the wanderings through the burned-up country round Marseilles, where they used to steal big onions and eat them raw by the side of some ditch, the dreams, the schemings, the pence put into a common fund, and, when fortune had begun to smile on them, the fun they had had together, those excellent quiet little suppers over which they would tell each other everything, with their elbows on the table.

How can one ever reach the point of seriously quarrelling when one knows the other so well, when they have lived together like two twins at the breast of the lean and strong nurse, Poverty, sharing her sour milk and her rough caresses! These thoughts passed through Hemerlingue's mind like a flash of lightning. Almost instinctively he let his heavy hand fall into the one which the Nabob was holding out to him. Something of the primitive animal was roused in them, something stronger than their enmity, and these two men, each of whom for ten years had been trying to bring the other to ruin and disgrace, fell to talking without any reserve.

Generally, between friends newly met, after the first effusions are over, a silence comes as if they had no more to tell each other, while it is in reality the abundance of things,

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their precipitate rush, that prevents them from finding utterance. The two chums had touched that condition; but Jansoulet kept a tight grasp on the banker's arm, fearing to see him escape and resist the kindly impulse he had just roused.

"You are not in a hurry, are you? We can take a little walk, if you like. It has stopped raining, the air is pleasant; one feels twenty years younger."

"Yes, it is pleasant," said Hemerlingue; "only I cannot walk for long; my legs are heavy."

"True; your poor legs. See, there is a bench over there. Let us go and sit down. Lean on me, old friend."

And the Nabob, with brotherly aid, led him to one of those benches dotted here and there among the tombs, on which those inconsolable mourners rest who make the cemetery their usual walk and abode. He settled him in his seat, gazed upon him tenderly, pitied him for his infirmity, and, following what was quite a natural channel in such a spot, they came to talking of their health, of the old age that was approaching. The one was dropsical, the other subject to apoplectic fits. Both were in the habit of dosing themselves with the Jenkins pearls, a dangerous remedy—witness Mora, so quickly carried off.

"My poor duke!" said Jansoulet.

"A great loss to the country," remarked the banker with an air of conviction.

And the Nabob added naïvely:

"For me above all, for me; for, if he had lived— Ah! what luck you have, what luck you have!"

Fearing to have wounded him, he went on quickly:

"And then, too, you are clever, so very clever."

The baron looked at him with a wink so droll, that his little black eyelashes disappeared amid his yellow fat.

"No," said he, "it is not I who am clever. It is Marie."

"Marie?"

"Yes, the baroness. Since her baptism she has given up her name of Yamina for that of Marie. She is a real sort of woman. She knows more than I do myself about banking

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and Paris and business. It is she who manages everything at home."

"You are very fortunate," sighed Jansoulet. His air of gloom told a long story of qualities missing in Mlle. Afchin. Then, after a silence, the baron resumed:

"She has a great grudge against you, Marie, you know. She will not be pleased when she hears that we have been talking together."

A frown passed over his heavy brow, as though he were regretting their reconciliation, at the thought of the scene which he would have with his wife. Jansoulet stammered:

"I have done her no harm, however."

"Come, come, neither of you has been very nice to her. Think of the affront put upon her when we called after our marriage. Your wife sending word to us that she was not in the habit of receiving quondam slaves. As though our friendship ought not to have been stronger than a prejudice. Women don't forget things of that kind."

"But no responsibility lay with me for that, old friend. You know how proud those Afchins are."

He was not proud himself, poor man. His mien was so woebegone, so supplicating under his friend's frown, that he moved him to pity. Decidedly, the cemetery had softened the baron.

"Listen, Bernard; there is only one thing that counts. If you want us to be friends, as formerly, and this reconciliation not to be wasted, you will have to get my wife to consent. Without that nothing can be done. When Mlle. Afchin shut her door in our faces you let her have her way, did you not? In the same way, on my side, if Marie said to me when I go home, 'I will not let you be friends,' all my protestations now would not prevent me from throwing you overboard. For there is no such thing as friendship in face of such difficulties. Peace at one's fireside is better than everything else."

"But in that case, what is to be done?" asked the Nabob, frightened.

"I am going to tell you. The baroness is at home every Saturday. Come with your wife and pay her a visit the day

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after to-morrow. You will find the best society in Paris at the house. The past shall not be mentioned. The ladies will gossip together of chiffons and frocks, talk of the things women do talk about. And then the whole matter will be settled. We shall become friends as we used to be; and since you are in difficulties, well, we will find some way of getting you out of them."

"Do you think so? The fact is I am in terrible straits," said the other, shaking his head.

Hemerlingue's cunning eyes disappeared again beneath the folds of his cheeks like two flies in butter.

"Well, yes; I have played a strong game. But you don't lack shrewdness, all the same. The loan of the fifteen millions to the Bey—it was a good stroke, that. Ah! you are bold enough; only you hold your cards badly. One can see your game."

Till now they had been talking in low tones, impressed by the silence of the great necropolis; but little by little human interests asserted themselves in a louder key even there where their nothingness lay exposed on all those flat stones covered with dates and figures, as if death was only an affair of time and calculation—the desired solution of a problem.

Hemerlingue enjoyed the sight of his friend reduced to such humility, and gave him advice on his affairs, with which he seemed to be fully acquainted. According to him the Nabob could still get out of his difficulties very well. Everything depended on the validation, on the turning up of a card. The question was to make sure that it should be a good one. But Jansoulet had no more confidence. In losing Mora, he had lost everything.

"You lose Mora, but you regain me; so things are equalized," said the banker tranquilly.

"No, do you see it is impossible. It is too late. Le Merquier has completed his report. It is a dreadful one, I believe."

"Well, if he has completed his report, he will have to prepare another."

"How is that to be done?"

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The baron looked at him with surprise.

"Ah, you are losing your senses. Why, by paying him a hundred, two hundred, three hundred thousand francs, if necessary."

"How can you think of such a thing? Le Merquier, that man of integrity! 'My conscience,' as they call him."

This time Hemerlingue's laugh burst forth with an extraordinary heartiness, and must have reached the inmost recesses of the neighbouring mausoleums, little accustomed to such disrespect.

"'My conscience' a man of integrity! Ah! you amuse me. You don't know, then, that he is in my pay, conscience and all, and that—" He paused, and looked behind him, somewhat startled by a sound which he had heard. "Listen."

It was the echo of his laughter sent back to them from the depths of a vault, as if the idea of Le Merquier having a conscience moved even the dead to mirth.

"Suppose we walk a little," said he, "it begins to be chilly on this bench."

Then, as they walked among the tombs, he went on to explain to him with a certain pedantic fatuity, that in France bribes played as important a part as in the East. Only one had to be a little more delicate about it here. You veiled your bribes. "Thus, take this Le Merquier, for instance. Instead of offering him your money openly, in a big purse, as you would to a local pasha, you go about it indirectly. The man is fond of pictures. He is constantly having dealings with Schwalbach, who employs him as a decoy for his Catholic clients. Well, you offer him some picture—a souvenir to hang on a panel in his study. The whole point is to make the price quite clear. But you will see. I will take you round to call on him myself. I will show you how the thing is worked."

And delighted at the amazement of the Nabob, who, to flatter him, exaggerated his surprise still further, and opened his eyes wide with an air of admiration, the banker enlarged the scope of his lesson—made of it a veritable course of Parisian and worldly philosophy.

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"See, old comrade, what one has to look after in Paris, above everything, is the keeping up of appearances. They are the only things that count—appearances! Now you have not sufficient care for them. You go about town, your waistcoat unbuttoned, a good-humoured fellow, talking of your affairs, just what you are by nature. You stroll around just as you would in the bazaars of Tunis. That is how you have come to get bowled over, my good Bernard."

He paused to take breath, feeling quite exhausted. In an hour he had walked farther and spoken more than he was accustomed to do in the course of a whole year. They noticed, as they stopped, that their walk and conversation had led them back in the direction of Mora's grave, which was situated just above a little exposed plateau, whence looking over a thousand closely packed roofs, they could see Montmartre, the Buttes Chaumont, their rounded outline in the distance looking like high waves. In the hollows lights were already beginning to twinkle, like ships' lanterns, through the violet mists that were rising; chimneys seemed to leap upward like masts, or steamer funnels discharging their smoke. Those three undulations, with the tide of Père Lachaise, were clearly suggestive of waves of the sea, following each other at equal intervals. The sky was bright, as often happens in the evening of a rainy day, an immense sky, shaded with tints of dawn, against which the family tomb of Mora exhibited in relief four allegorical figures, imploring, meditative, thoughtful, whose attitudes were made more imposing by the dying light. Of the speeches, of the official condolences, nothing remained. The soil trodden down all around, masons at work washing the dirt from the plaster threshold, were all that was left to recall the recent burial.

Suddenly the door of the ducal tomb shut with a clash of all its metallic weight. Thenceforth the late Minister of State was to remain alone, utterly alone, in the shadow of its night, deeper than that which then was creeping up from the bottom of the garden, invading the winding paths, the stone stairways, the bases of the columns, pyramids and tombs of every kind, whose summits were reached more slowly by the shroud. Navvies, all white with that chalky

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whiteness of dried bones, were passing by, carrying their tools and wallets. Furtive mourners, dragging themselves away regretfully from tears and prayer, glided along the margins of the clumps of trees, seeming to skirt them as with the silent flight of night-birds, while from the extremities of Père Lachaise voices rose—melancholy calls announcing the closing time. The day of the cemetery was at its end. The city of the dead, handed over once more to Nature, was becoming an immense wood with open spaces marked by crosses. Down in a valley, the window-panes of a custodian's house were lighted up. A shudder seemed to run through the air, losing itself in murmurings along the dim paths.

"Let us go," the two old comrades said to each other, gradually coming to feel the impression of that twilight, which seemed colder than elsewhere; but before moving off, Hemerlingue, pursuing his train of thought, pointed to the monument winged at the four corners by the draperies and the outstretched hands of its sculptured figures.

"Look there," said he. "That was the man who understood the art of keeping up appearances."

Jansoulet took his arm to aid him in the descent.

"Ah, yes, he was clever. But you are the most clever of all," he answered with his terrible Gascon intonation.

Hemerlingue made no protest.

"It is to my wife that I owe it. So I strongly recommend you to make your peace with her, because unless you do——"

"Oh, don't be afraid. We shall come on Saturday. But you will take me to see Le Merquier."

And while the two silhouettes, the one tall and square, the other massive and short, were passing out of sight among the twinings of the great labyrinth, while the voice of Jansoulet guiding his friend, "This way, old fellow—lean hard on my arm," died away by insensible degrees, a stray beam of the setting sun fell upon and illuminated behind them in the little plateau, an expressive and colossal bust, with great brow beneath long swept-back hair, and powerful and ironic lip—the bust of Balzac watching them.

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CHAPTER XX

LA BARONNE HEMERLINGUE

JUST at the end of the long vault, under which were the offices of Hemerlingue and Sons, the black tunnel which Joyeuse had for ten years adorned and illuminated with his dreams, a monumental staircase with a wrought-iron balustrade, a staircase of mediæval time, led towards the left to the reception rooms of the baroness, which looked out on the court-yard just above the cashier's office, so that in summer, when the windows were open, the ring of the gold, the crash of the piles of money scattered on the counters, softened a little by the rich and lofty hangings at the windows, made a mercantile accompaniment to the buzzing conversation of fashionable Catholicism.

The entrance struck at once the note of this house, as of her who did the honours of it. A mixture of a vague scent of the sacristy, with the excitement of the Bourse, and the most refined fashion, these heterogeneous elements, met and crossed each other's path there, but remained as much apart as the noble faubourg, under whose patronage the striking conversion of the Moslem had taken place, was from the financial quarters where Hemerlingue had his life and his friends. The Levantine colony—pretty numerous in Paris—was composed in great measure of German Jews, bankers or brokers who had made colossal fortunes in the East, and still did business here, not to lose the habit. The colony showed itself regularly on the baroness's visiting day. Tunisians on a visit to Paris never failed to call on the wife of the great banker; and old Colonel Brahim, *chargé d'affaires* of the Bey, with his flabby mouth and bloodshot eyes, had his nap every Saturday in the corner of the same divan.

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La Baronne Hemerlingue

"One seems to smell scorching in your drawing-room, my child," said the old Princess de Dions smilingly to the newly named Marie, whom M. Le Merquier and she had led to the font. But the presence of all these heretics—Jews, Moslems, and even renegades—of these great overdressed blotched women, loaded with gold and ornaments, veritable bundles of clothes, did not hinder the Faubourg Saint-Germain from visiting, surrounding, and looking after the young convert, the plaything of these noble ladies, a very obedient puppet, whom they showed, whom they took out, and whose evangelical simplicities, so piquant by contrast with her past, they quoted everywhere. Perhaps deep down in the heart of her amiable patronesses a hope lay of meeting in this circle of returned Orientals some new subject for conversion, an occasion for filling the aristocratic Chapel of Missions again with the touching spectacle of one of those adult baptisms which carry one back to the first days of the Faith, far away on the banks of the Jordan; baptisms soon to be followed by a first communion, a confirmation, when baptismal vows are renewed; occasions when a godmother may accompany her godchild, guide the young soul, share in the naïve transports of a newly awakened belief, and may also display a choice of toilettes, delicately graduated to the importance of the sentiment of the ceremony. But not every day does it happen that one of the leaders of finance brings to Paris an Armenian slave as his wife.

A slave! That was the blot in the past of this woman from the East, bought in the bazaar of Adrianople for the Emperor of Morocco, then sold, when he died and his harem was dispersed, to the young Bey Ahmed. Hemerlingue had married her when she passed from this new seraglio, but she could not be received at Tunis, where no woman—Moor, Turk, or European—would consent to treat a former slave as an equal, on account of a prejudice like that which separates the creoles from the best disguised quadroons. Even in Paris the Hemerlingues found this invincible prejudice among the small foreign colonies, constituted, as they were, of little circles full of susceptibilities and local traditions. Yamina thus passed two or three years

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in a complete solitude whose leisure and spiteful feelings she well knew how to utilize, for she was an ambitious woman endowed with extraordinary will and persistence. She learned French thoroughly, said farewell to her embroidered vests and pantaloons of red silk, accustomed her figure and her walk to European toilettes, to the inconvenience of long dresses, and then, one night at the opera, showed the astonished Parisians the spectacle, a little uncivilized still, but delicate, elegant, and original, of a Mohammedan in a costume of *Léonard's*.

The sacrifice of her religion soon followed that of her costume. Mme. Hemerlingue had long abandoned the practices of Mohammedan religion, when M. Le Merquier, their friend and mentor in Paris, showed them that the baroness's public conversion would open to her the doors of that section of the Parisian world whose access became more and more difficult as society became more democratic. Once the Faubourg Saint-Germain was conquered, all the others would follow. And, in fact, when, after the announcement of the baptism, they learned that the greatest ladies in France could be seen at the Baroness Hemerlingue's Saturdays, Mmes. Gügenheim, Fuernberg, Caraïscaki, Maurice Trott—all wives of millionaires celebrated on the markets of Tunis—gave up their prejudices and begged to be invited to the former slave's receptions. Mme. Jansoulet alone—newly arrived with a stock of cumbersome Oriental ideas in her mind, like her ostrich eggs, her narghilé pipe, and the Tunisian *bric-à-brac* in her rooms—protested against what she called an impropriety, a cowardice, and declared that she would never set her foot at *her* house. Soon a little retrograde movement was felt round the Gügenheims, the Caraïscaki, and the other people, as happens at Paris every time when some irregular position, endeavouring to establish itself, brings on regrets and defections. They had gone too far to draw back, but they resolved to make the value of their good-will, of their sacrificed prejudices, felt, and the Baroness Marie well understood the shade of meaning in the protecting tone of the Levantines, treating her as "My dear child," "My dear good girl," with an almost con-

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temptuous pride. Thenceforward her hatred of the Jansoulets knew no bounds—the complicated ferocious hatred of the seraglio, with strangling and the sack at the end, perhaps more difficult to arrive at in Paris than on the banks of the lake of El Bahaira, but for which she had already prepared the stout sack and the cord.

One can imagine, knowing all this, what was the surprise and agitation of this corner of exotic society, when the news spread, not only that the great Afchin—as these ladies called her—had consented to see the baroness, but that she would pay her first visit on her next Saturday. Neither the Fuernbergs nor the Trotts would wish to miss such an occasion. On her side, the baroness did everything in her power to give the utmost brilliancy to this solemn reparation. She wrote, she visited, and succeeded so well, that in spite of the lateness of the season, Mme. Jansoulet, on arriving at four o'clock at the Faubourg Saint-Honoré, would have seen drawn up before the great arched doorway, side by side with the discreet russet livery of the Princess de Dion, and of many authentic *blasons*, the pretentious and fictitious arms, the multicoloured wheels of a crowd of plutocrat equipages, and the tall powdered lackeys of the Caraïscaki.

Above, in the reception rooms, was another strange and resplendent crowd. In the first two rooms there was a going and coming, a continual passage of rustling silks up to the boudoir where the baroness sat, sharing her attentions and cajoleries between two very distinct camps. On one side were dark toilettes, modest in appearance, whose refinement was appreciable only to observant eyes; on the other, a wild burst of vivid colour, opulent figures, rich diamonds, floating scarfs, exotic fashions, in which one felt a regret for a warmer climate, and more luxurious life. Here were sharp taps with the fan, discreet whispers from the few men present, some of the *bien pensant* youth, silent, immovable, sucking the handles of their canes, two or three figures, upright behind the broad backs of their wives, speaking with their heads bent forward, as if they were offering contraband goods for sale; and in a corner the fine patriarchal

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beard and the violet cassock of an orthodox Armenian bishop.

The baroness, in attempting to harmonize these fashionable diversities, to keep her rooms full until the famous interview, moved about continually, took part in ten different conversations, raising her harmonious and velvety voice to the twittering diapason which distinguishes Oriental women, caressing and coaxing, the mind supple as the body, touching on all subjects, and mixing in the requisite proportions fashion and charity sermons, theatres and bazaars, the dressmaker and the confessor. The mistress of the house united a great personal charm with this acquired science—a science visible even in her black and very simple dress, which brought out her nun-like pallor, her houri-like eyes, her shining and plaited hair drawn back from a narrow, child-like forehead, a forehead of which the small mouth accentuated the mystery, hiding from the inquisitive the former *favourite's* whole varied past, she who had no age, who knew not herself the date of her birth, and never remembered to have been a child.

Evidently if the absolute power of evil—rare indeed among women, influenced as they are by their impressionable physical nature by so many different currents—could take possession of a soul, it would be in that of this slave, moulded by basenesses, revolted but patient, and complete mistress of herself, like all those whom the habit of veiling the eyes has accustomed to lie safely and unscrupulously.

At this moment no one could have suspected the anguish she suffered; to see her kneeling before the princess, an old, good, straightforward soul, of whom the Fuernberg was always saying, "Call that a princess—that!"

"I beg of you, godmamma, don't go away yet."

She surrounded her with all sorts of cajoleries, of graces, of little airs, without telling her, be sure, that she wanted to keep her till the arrival of the Jansoulets, to add to her triumph.

"But," said the princess, pointing out to her the majestic Armenian, silent and grave, his tasselled hat on his

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knees, "I must take this poor bishop to the *Grand Saint-Christophe*, to buy some medals. He would never get on without me."

"No, no, I wish—you must—a few minutes more." And the baroness threw a furtive look on the ancient and sumptuous clock in a corner of the room.

Five o'clock already, and the great Afchin not arrived. The Levantines began to laugh behind their fans. Happily tea was just being served, also Spanish wines, and a crowd of delicious Turkish cakes which were only to be had in that house, whose receipts, brought away with her by the favourite, had been preserved in the harem, like some secrets of confectionery in our convents. That made a diversion. Hemerlingue, who on Saturdays came out of his office from time to time to make his bow to the ladies, was drinking a glass of Madeira near the little table while talking to Maurice Trott, once the dresser of Said-Pasha, when his wife approached him, gently and quietly. He knew what anger this impenetrable calm must cover, and asked her, in a low tone, timidly:

"No one?"

"No one. You see to what an insult you expose me."

She smiled, her eyes half closed, taking with the end of her nail a crumb of cake from his long black whiskers, but her little transparent nostrils trembled with a terrible eloquence.

"Oh, she will come," said the banker, his mouth full. "I am sure she will come."

The noise of dresses, of a train rustling in the next room made the baroness turn quickly. But, to the great joy of the "bundles," looking on from their corner, it was not the lady they were expecting.

This tall, elegant blonde, with worn features and irreproachable toilette, was not like Mlle. Afchin. She was worthy in every way to bear a name as celebrated as that of Dr. Jenkins. In the last two or three months the beautiful Mme. Jenkins had greatly changed, become much older. In the life of a woman who has long remained young there comes a time when the years, which have passed over her head with-

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out leaving a wrinkle, trace their passage all at once brutally in indelible marks. People no longer say, on seeing her, "How beautiful she is!" but "How beautiful she must have been!" And this cruel way of speaking in the past, of throwing back to a distant period that which was but yesterday a visible fact, marks a beginning of old age and of retirement, a change of all her triumphs into memories. Was it the disappointment of seeing the doctor's wife arrive, instead of Mme. Jansoulet, or did the discredit which the Duke de Mora's death had thrown on the fashionable physician fall on her who bore his name? There was a little of each of these reasons, and perhaps of another, in the cool greeting of the baroness. A slight greeting on the ends of her lips, some hurried words, and she returned to the noble battalion nibbling vigorously away. The room had become animated under the effects of wine. People no longer whispered; they talked. The lamps brought in added a new brilliancy to the gathering, but announced that it was near its close; some indeed, not interested in the great event, having already taken their leave. And still the Jansoulets did not come.

All at once a heavy, hurried step. The Nabob appeared, alone, buttoned up in his black coat, correctly dressed, but with his face upset, his eyes haggard, still trembling from the terrible scene which he had left.

She would not come.

In the morning he had told the maids to dress madame for three o'clock, as he did each time he took out the Levantine with him, when it was necessary to move this indolent person, who, not being able to accept even any responsibility whatever, left others to think, decide, act for her, going willingly where she was desired to go, once she was started. And it was on this amiability that he counted to take her to Hemerlingue's. But when, after *déjeuner*, Jansoulet dressed, superb, perspiring with the effort to put on gloves, asked if madame would soon be ready, he was told that she was not going out. The matter was grave, so grave, that putting on one side all the intermediaries of valets and maids, which they made use of in their conjugal dialogues, he ran

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up the stairs four steps at once like a gust of wind, and entered the draperied rooms of the Levantine.

She was still in bed, dressed in that great open tunic of silk of two colours, which the Moors call a *djebba*, and in a little cap embroidered with gold, from which escaped her heavy long black hair, all entangled round her moon-shaped face, flushed from her recent meal. The sleeves of the *djebba* pushed back showed two enormous shapeless arms, loaded with bracelets, with long chains wandering through a heap of little mirrors, of red beads, of scent-boxes, of microscopic pipes, of cigarette cases—the childish toyshop collection of a Moorish woman at her rising.

The room, filled with the heavy opium-scented smoke of Turkish tobacco, was in similar disorder. Negresses went and came, slowly removing their mistress's coffee; the favourite gazelle was licking the dregs of a cup which its delicate muzzle had overturned on the carpet, while seated at the foot of the bed with a touching familiarity, the melancholy Cabassu was reading aloud to madame a drama in verse which Cardailhac was shortly going to produce. The Levantine was stupefied with this reading, absolutely astounded.

"My dear," said she to Jansoulet, in her thick Flemish accent, "I don't know what our manager is thinking of. I am just reading this *Revolt*, which he is so mad about. But it is impossible. There is nothing dramatic about it."

"Don't talk to me of the theatre," said Jansoulet, furious, in spite of his respect for the daughter of the Afchins. "What, you are not dressed yet? Weren't you told that we were going out?"

They had told her, but she had begun to read this stupid piece. And with her sleepy air:

"We will go out to-morrow."

"To-morrow! Impossible. We are expected to-day. A most important visit."

"But where?"

He hesitated a second.

"To Hemerlingue's."

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She raised her great eyes, thinking he was making game of her. Then he told her of his meeting with the baron at the funeral of de Mora and the understanding they had come to.

"Go there, if you like," said she coldly. "But you little know me if you believe that I, an Afchin, will ever set foot in that slave's house."

Cabassu, prudently seeing what was likely to happen, had fled into a neighbouring room, carrying with him the five acts of *The Revolt* under his arm.

"Come," said the Nabob to his wife, "I see that you do not know the terrible position I am in. Listen."

Without thinking of the maids or the negresses, with the sovereign indifference of an Oriental for his household, he proceeded to picture his great distress, his fortune sequestered over seas, his credit destroyed over here, his whole career in suspense before the judgment of the Chamber, the influence of the Hemerlingues on the judge-advocate, and the necessity of the sacrifice at the moment of all personal feeling to such important interests. He spoke hotly, tried to convince her, to carry her away. But she merely answered him, "I shall not go," as if it were only a matter of some unimportant walk, a little too long for her.

He said trembling:

"See, now, it is not possible that you should say that. Think that my fortune is at stake, the future of our children, the name you bear. Everything is at stake in what you cannot refuse to do."

He could have spoken thus for hours and been always met by the same firm, unshakable obstinacy—an Afchin could not visit a slave.

"Well, madame," said he violently, "this slave is worth more than you. She has increased tenfold her husband's wealth by her intelligence, while you, on the contrary——"

For the first time in the twelve years of their married life Jansoulet dared to hold up his head before his wife. Was he ashamed of this crime of *lèse-majesté*, or did he understand that such a remark would place an impassable gulf between them? He changed his tone, knelt down before the

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bed, with that cheerful tenderness when one persuades children to be reasonable.

"My little Martha, I beg of you—get up, dress yourself. It is for your own sake I ask it, for your comfort, for your own welfare. What would become of you if, for a caprice, a stupid whim, we should become poor?"

But the word—poor—represented absolutely nothing to the Levantine. One could speak of it before her, as of death before little children. She was not moved by it, not knowing what it was. She was perfectly determined to keep in bed in her *djebba*; and to show her decision, she lighted a new cigarette at her old one just finished; and while the poor Nabob surrounded his "dear little wife" with excuses, with prayers, with supplications, promising her a diadem of pearls a hundred times more beautiful than her own, if she would come, she watched the heavy smoke rising to the painted ceiling, wrapping herself up in it as in an imperturbable calm. At last, in face of this refusal, this silence, this barrier of headstrong obstinacy, Jansoulet unbridled his wrath and rose up to his full height:

"Come," said he, "I wish it."

He turned to the negresses:

"Dress your mistress at once."

And boor as he was at bottom, the son of a southern nail-maker asserting itself in this crisis which moved him so deeply, he threw back the coverlids with a brutal and contemptuous gesture, knocking down the innumerable toys they bore, and forcing the half-clad Levantine to bound to her feet with a promptitude amazing in so massive a person. She roared at the outrage, drew the folds of her dalmatic against her bust, pushed her cap sideways on her dishevelled hair, and began to abuse her husband.

"Never, understand me, never! You may drag me sooner to this——"

The filth flowed from her heavy lips as from a spout. Jansoulet could have imagined himself in some frightful den of the port of Marseilles, at some quarrel of prostitutes and bullies, or again at some open-air dispute between Genoese, Maltese, and Provençal hags, gleaning on the quays round

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the sacks of wheat, and abusing each other, crouched in the whirlwinds of golden dust. She was indeed a Levantine of a seaport, a spoiled child, who, in the evening, left alone, had heard from her terrace or from her gondola the sailors revile each other in every tongue of the Latin seas, and had remembered it all. The wretched man looked at her, frightened, terrified at what she forced him to hear, at her grotesque figure, foaming and gasping:

"No, I will not go—no, I will not go!"

And this was the mother of his children, a daughter of the Afchins! Suddenly, at the thought that his fate was in the hands of this woman, that it would only cost her a dress to put on to save him—and that time was flying—that soon it would be too late, a criminal feeling rose to his brain and distorted his features. He came straight to her, his hands contracted, with such a terrible expression that the daughter of the Afchins, frightened, rushed, calling towards the door by which the *masseur* had just gone out:

"Aristide!"

This cry, the words, this intimacy of his wife with a servant! Jansoulet stopped, his rage suddenly calmed; then, with a gesture of disgust, he flung himself out, slamming the doors, more eager to fly the misfortune and the horror whose presence he divined in his own home, than to seek elsewhere the help he had been promised.

A quarter of an hour later he made his appearance at the Hemerlingues', making a despairing gesture as he entered to the banker, and approached the baroness stammering the ready-made phrase he had heard repeated so often the night of his ball, "His wife, very unwell—most grieved not to have been able to come—" She did not give him time to finish, rose slowly, unwound herself like a long and slender snake from the pleated folds of her tight dress, and said, without looking at him, "Oh, I knew—I knew!" then changed her place and took no more notice of him. He attempted to approach Hemerlingue, but the good man seemed absorbed in his conversation with Maurice Trott. Then he went to sit down near Mme. Jenkins, whose isolation seemed like his own. But, even while talking to the

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poor woman, as languid as he was preoccupied, he was watching the baroness doing the honours of this drawing-room, so comfortable when compared with his own gilded halls.

It was time to leave. Mme. Hemerlingue went to the door with some of the ladies, presented her forehead to the old princess, bent under the benediction of the Armenian bishop, nodded with a smile to the young men with the canes, found for each the fitting adieu with perfect ease; and the wretched man could not prevent himself from comparing this Eastern slave, so Parisian, so distinguished in the best society of the world, with the other, the European brutalized by the East, stupefied with Turkish tobacco, and swollen with idleness. His ambitions, his pride as a husband, were extinguished and humiliated in this marriage of which he saw the danger and the emptiness—a final cruelty of fate taking from him even the refuge of personal happiness from all his public disasters.

Little by little the room was emptied. The Levantines disappeared one after another, leaving each time an immense void in their place. Mme. Jenkins was gone, and only two or three ladies remained whom Jansoulet did not know, and behind whom the mistress of the house seemed to shelter herself from him. But Hemerlingue was free, and the Nabob rejoined him at the moment when he was furtively escaping to his offices on the same floor opposite his rooms. Jansoulet went out with him, forgetting in his trouble to salute the baroness, and once on the antechamber staircase, Hemerlingue, cold and reserved while he was under his wife's eye, expanded a little.

"It is very annoying," said he in a low voice, as if he feared to be overheard, "that Mme. Jansoulet has not been willing to come."

Jansoulet answered him by a movement of despair and savage helplessness.

"Annoying, annoying," repeated the other in a whisper, and feeling for his key in his pocket.

"Come, old fellow," said the Nabob, taking his hand, "there's no reason, because our wives don't agree— That

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doesn't hinder us from remaining friends. What a good chat the other day, eh?"

"No doubt," said the baron, disengaging himself, as he opened the door noiselessly, showing the deep workroom, whose lamp burned solitarily before the enormous empty chair. "Come, good-bye, I must go; I have my mail to despatch."

"*Ya didon, monci*" (But look here, sir), said the poor Nabob, trying to joke, and using the *patois* of the south to recall to his old chum all the pleasant memories stirred up the other evening. "Our visit to Le Merquier still holds good. The picture we were going to present to him, you know. What day?"

"Ah, yes, Le Merquier—true—eh—well, soon. I will write to you."

"Really? You know it is very important."

"Yes, yes. I will write to you. Good-bye."

And the big man shut his door in a hurry, as if he were afraid of his wife coming.

Two days after, the Nabob received a note from Hemerlingue, almost unreadable on account of the complicated scrawls, of abbreviations more or less commercial, under which the ex-sutler hid his entire want of spelling:

MY DEAR OLD COM/—I cannot accom/ you to Le Mer/. Too bus/ just now. Besid/ y/ will be bet/ alone to tal/. Go th/ bold/. You are exp/. A/ Cassette, ev/ morn/ 8 to 10.

Yours faith/
HEM.

Below, as a postscript, a very small hand had written very legibly:

"A religious picture, as good as possible."

What was he to think of this letter? Was there real good-will in it, or polite evasion? In any case hesitation was no longer possible. Time pressed. Jansoulet made a bold effort, then—for he was very frightened of Le Merquier—and called on him one morning.

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La Baronne Hemerlingue

Our strange Paris, alike in its population and its aspects, seems a specimen map of the whole world. In the Marais there are narrow streets, with old sculptured worm-eaten doors, with overhanging gables and balconies, which remind you of old Heidelberg. The Faubourg Saint-Honoré, lying round the Russian church with its white minarets and golden domes, seems a part of Moscow. On Montmartre I know a picturesque and crowded corner which is simply Algiers. Little, low, clean houses, each with its brass plate and little front garden, are English streets between Neuilly and the Champs-Élysées, while all behind the apse of Saint-Sulpice, the Rue Feron, the Rue Cassette, lying peaceably in the shadow of its great towers, roughly paved, their doors each with its knocker, seem lifted out of some provincial and religious town—Tours or Orleans, for example—in the district of the cathedral or the palace, where the great overhanging trees in the gardens rock themselves to the sound of the bells and the choir.

It was there, in the neighbourhood of the Catholic Club —of which he had just been made honorary president—that M. Le Merquier lived. He was *avocat*, deputy for Lyons, business man of all the great communities of France; and Hemerlingue, moved by a deep-seated instinct, had intrusted him with the affairs of his firm.

He arrived before nine o'clock at an old mansion of which the ground floor was occupied by a religious bookshop, asleep in the odour of the sacristy, and of the thick gray paper on which the stories of miracles are printed for hawkers, and mounted the great whitewashed convent stairway. Jansoulet was touched by this provincial and Catholic atmosphere, in which revived the souvenirs of his past in the south, impressions of infancy still intact, thanks to his long absence from home; and since his arrival at Paris he had had neither the time nor the occasion to call them in question. Fashionable hypocrisy had presented itself to him in all its forms save that of religious integrity, and he refused now to believe in the venality of a man who lived in such surroundings. Introduced into the *avocat's* waiting-room—a vast parlour with fine white muslin curtains, having for its sole

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ornament a large and beautiful copy of Tintoretto's Dead Christ—his doubt and trouble changed into indignant conviction. It was not possible! He had been deceived as to Le Merquier. There was surely some bold slander in it, such as so easily spreads in Paris—or perhaps it was one of those ferocious snares among which he had stumbled for six months. No, this stern conscience, so well known in Parliament and the courts, this cold and austere personage, could not be treated like those great swollen pashas with loosened waist-belts and floating sleeves open to conceal the bags of gold. He would only expose himself to a scandalous refusal, to the legitimate revolt of outraged honour, if he attempted such means of corruption.

The Nabob told himself all this, as he sat on the oak bench which ran round the room, a bench polished with serge dresses and the rough cloth of cassocks. In spite of the early hour several persons were waiting there with him. A Dominican, ascetic and serene, walking up and down with great strides; two sisters of charity, buried under their caps, counting long rosaries which measured their time of waiting; priests from Lyons, recognisable by the shape of their hats; others reserved and severe in air, sitting at the great ebony table which filled the middle of the room, and turning over some of those pious journals printed at Fouvières, just above Lyons, the *Echo of Purgatory*, the *Rose-Bush of Mary*, which give as a present to all yearly subscribers pontifical indulgences and remissions of future sins. Some muttered words, a stifled cough, the light whispered prayers of the sisters, recalled to Jansoulet the distant and confused sensation of the hours of waiting in the corner of his village church round the confessional on the eves of the great festivals of the Church.

At last his turn came, and if a doubt as to M. Le Merquier had remained, he doubted no longer when he saw this great office, simple and severe, yet a little more ornate than the waiting-room, a fitting frame for the austerity of the lawyer's principles, and for his thin form, tall, stooping, narrow-shouldered, squeezed into a black coat too short in the sleeves, from which protruded two black fists, broad and flat,

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two sticks of Indian ink with hieroglyphs of great veins. The clerical deputy had, with the leaden hue of a Lyonnese grown mouldy between his two rivers, a certain life of expression which he owed to his double look—sometimes sparkling, but impenetrable behind the glass of his spectacles; more often, vivid, mistrustful, and dark, above these same glasses, surrounded by the shadow which a lifted eye and a stooping head gives the eyebrow.

After a greeting almost cordial in comparison with the cold bow which the two colleagues exchanged at the Chamber, a " I was expecting you " in which perhaps an intention showed itself, the lawyer pointed the Nabob into a seat near his desk, told the smug domestic in black not to come till he was summoned, arranged a few papers, after which, sinking into his arm-chair with the attitude of a man ready to listen, who becomes all ears, his legs crossed, he rested his chin on his hand, with his eyes fixed on a great rep curtain falling to the ground in front of him.

The moment was decisive, the situation embarrassing. Jansoulet did not hesitate. It was one of the poor Nabob's pretensions to know men as well as Mora. And this instinct, which, said he, had never deceived him, warned him that he was at that moment dealing with a rigid and unshakable honesty, a conscience in hard stone, untouchable by pick-axe or powder. " My conscience ! " Suddenly he changed his programme, threw to the winds the tricks and equivocations which embarrassed his open and courageous disposition, and, head high and heart open, held to this honest man a language he was born to understand.

" Do not be astonished, my dear colleague,"—his voice trembled, but soon became firm in the conviction of his defence—" do not be astonished if I am come to find you here instead of asking simply to be heard by the third committee. The explanation which I have to make to you is so delicate and confidential that it would have been impossible to make it publicly before my colleagues."

Maître Le Merquier, above his spectacles, looked at the curtain with a disturbed air. Evidently the conversation was taking an unexpected turn.

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"I do not enter on the main question," said the Nabob. "Your report, I am assured, is impartial and loyal, such as your conscience has dictated to you. Only there are some heart-breaking calumnies spread about me to which I have not answered, and which have perhaps influenced the opinion of the committee. It is on this subject that I wish to speak to you. I know the confidence with which you are honoured by your colleagues, M. Le Merquier, and that, when I shall have convinced you, your word will be enough without forcing me to lay bare my distress to them all. You know the accusation—the most terrible, the most ignoble. There are so many people who might be deceived by it. My enemies have given names, dates, addresses. Well, I bring you the proofs of my innocence. I lay them bare before you—you only—for I have grave reasons for keeping the whole affair secret."

Then he showed the lawyer a certificate from the Consulate of Tunis, that during twenty years he had only left the principality twice—the first time to see his dying father at Bourg-Saint Andéol; the second, to make, with the Bey, a visit of three days to his château of Saint-Romans.

"How comes it, then, that with a document so conclusive in my hands I have not brought my accusers before the courts to contradict and confound them? Alas, monsieur, there are cruel responsibilities in families. I have a brother, a poor fellow, weak and spoiled, who has for long wallowed in the mud of Paris, who has left there his intelligence and his honour. Has he descended to that degree of baseness which I, in his name, am accused of? I have not dared to find out. All I can say is, that my poor father, who knew more than any one in the family of it, whispered to me in dying, 'Bernard, it is your elder brother who has killed me. I die of shame, my child.'"

He paused, compelled by his suppressed emotion; then:

"My father is dead, Maître Le Merquier, but my mother still lives, and it is for her sake, for her peace, that I have held back, that I hold back still, before the scandal of my justification. Up to now, in fact, the mud thrown at me has not touched her; it only comes from a certain class, in a special

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press, a thousand leagues away from the poor woman. But law courts, a trial—it would be proclaiming our misfortune from one end of France to the other, the articles of the official paper reproduced by all the journals, even those of the little district where my mother lives. The calumny, my defence, her two children covered with shame by the one stroke, the name—the only pride of the old peasant—forever disgraced. It would be too much for her. It would be enough to kill her. And truly, I find it enough, too. That is why I have had the courage to be silent, to weary, if I could, my enemies by silence. But I need some one to answer for me in the Chamber. It must not have the right to expel me for reasons which would dishonour me, and since it has chosen you as the chairman of the committee, I am come to tell you everything, as to a confessor, to a priest, begging you not to divulge anything of this conversation, even in the interests of my case. I only ask of you, my dear colleague, absolute silence; for the rest, I rely on your justice and your loyalty."

He rose, ready to go, and Le Merquier did not move, still asking the green curtain in front of him, as if seeking inspiration for his answer there. At last he said:

"It shall be as you desire, my dear colleague. This confidence shall remain between us. You have told me nothing, I have heard nothing."

The Nabob, still heated with his burst of confidence, which demanded, it seemed to him, a cordial response, a pressure of the hand, was seized with a strange uneasiness. This coolness, this absent look, so unnerved him that he was at the door with the awkward bow of one who feels himself importunate, when the other stopped him.

"Wait, then, my dear colleague. What a hurry you are in to leave me! A few moments, I beg of you. I am too happy to have a chat with a man like you. Besides, we have more than one common bond. Our friend Hemerlingue has told me that you, too, are much interested in pictures."

Jansoulet trembled. The two words—"Hemerlingue," "pictures"—meeting in the same phrase so unexpectedly, restored all his doubts, all his perplexities. He did not give

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himself away yet, however, and let Le Merquier advance, word by word, testing the ground for his stumbling advances. People had told him often of the collection of his honourable colleague. "Would it be indiscreet to ask the favour of being admitted, to——"

"On the contrary, I should feel much honoured," said the Nabob, tickled in the most sensible—since the most costly—point of his vanity; and looking round him at the walls of the room, he added with the tone of a connoisseur, "You have some fine things, too."

"Oh," said the other modestly, "just a few canvases. Painting is so dear now, it is a taste so difficult to satisfy, a true passion *de luxe*—a passion for a Nabob," said he, smiling, with a furtive look over his glasses.

They were two prudent players, face to face; but Jansoulet was a little astray in this new situation, where he who only knew how to be bold, had to be on his guard.

"When I think," murmured the lawyer, "that I have been ten years covering these walls, and that I have still this panel to fill."

In fact, at the most conspicuous place on the wall there was an empty place, emptied rather, for a great gold-headed nail near the ceiling showed the visible, almost clumsy, trace of the snare laid for the poor simpleton, who let himself be taken in it so foolishly.

"My dear M. Le Merquier," said he with his engaging, good-natured voice, "I have a Virgin of Tintoretto's just the size of your panel."

Impossible to read anything in the eyes of the lawyer, this time hidden under their overhanging brows.

"Permit me to hang it there, opposite your table. That will help you to think sometimes of me."

"And to soften the severities of my report, too, sir?" cried Le Merquier, formidable and upright, his hand on the bell. "I have seen many shameless things in my life, but never anything like this. Such offers to me, in my own house!"

"But, my dear colleague, I swear to you——"

"Show him out," said the lawyer to the hang-dog servant

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who had just entered; and from the middle of his office, whose door remained open, before all the waiting-room, where the paternosters were silent, he pursued Jansoulet—who slunk off murmuring excuses to the door—with these terrible words:

"You have outraged the honour of the Chamber in my person, sir. Our colleagues shall be informed of it this very day; and, this crime coming after your others, you will learn to your cost that Paris is not the East, and that here we do not make shameless traffic of the human conscience."

Then, after having chased the seller from the temple, the just man closed his door, and approaching the mysterious green curtain, said in a tone that sounded soft amidst his pretended anger:

"Is that what you wanted, Baroness Marie?"

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XXI

THE SITTING

THAT morning there were no guests to lunch at 32 Place Vendôme, so that towards one o'clock might have been seen the majestic form of M. Barreau, gleaming white at the gate, among four or five of his scullions in their cook's caps, and as many stable-boys in Scotch caps—an imposing group, which gave to the house the aspect of an hotel where the staff was taking the air between the arrivals of the trains. To complete the resemblance, a cab drew up before the door and the driver took down an old leather trunk, while a tall old woman, her upright figure wrapped in a little green shawl, jumped lightly to the footpath, a basket on her arm, looked at the number with great attention, then approached the servants to ask if it was there that M. Bernard Jansoulet lived.

"It is here," was the answer; "but he is not in."

"That does not matter," said the old lady simply.

She returned to the driver, who put down her trunk in the porch, and paid him, returning her purse to her pocket at once with a gesture that said much for the caution of the provincial.

Since Jansoulet had been deputy for Corsica, the domestics had seen so many strange and exotic figures at his house, that they were not surprised at this sunburnt woman, with eyes glowing like coals, a true Corsican under her severe coif, but different from the ordinary provincial in the ease and tranquility of her manners.

"What, the master is not here?" said she, with an intonation which seemed better fitted for farm people in her part of the country, than for the insolent servants of a great Parisian mansion.

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"No, the master is not here."

"And the children?"

"They are at lessons. You cannot see them."

"And madame?"

"She is asleep. No one sees her before three o'clock."

It seemed to astonish the good woman a little that any one could stay in bed so late; but the tact which guides a refined nature, even without education, prevented her from saying anything before the servants, and she asked for Paul de Géry.

"He is abroad."

"Bompain Jean-Baptiste, then."

"He is with monsieur at the sitting."

Her great gray eyebrows wrinkled.

"It does not matter; take up my trunk just the same."

And with a little malicious twinkle of her eye, a proud revenge for their insolent looks, she added: "I am his mother."

The scullions and stable-boys drew back respectfully. M. Barreau raised his cap:

"I thought I had seen madame somewhere."

"And I too, my lad," answered Mme. Jansoulet, who shivered still at the remembrance of the Bey's *fête*.

"My lad," to M. Barreau, to a man of his importance! It raised her at once to a very high place in the esteem of the others.

Well! grandeur and splendour hardly dazzled this courageous old lady. She did not go into ecstasies over gilding and petty baubles, and as she walked up the grand staircase behind her trunk, the baskets of flowers on the landings, the lamps held by bronze statues, did not prevent her from noticing that there was an inch of dust on the balustrade, and holes in the carpet. She was taken to the rooms on the second floor belonging to the Levantine and her children; and there, in an apartment used as a linen-room, which seemed to be near the school-room (to judge by the murmur of children's voices), she waited alone, her basket on her knees, for the return of her Bernard, perhaps the waking of her daughter-in-law, or the great joy of embracing

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her grandchildren. What she saw around her gave her an idea of the disorder of this house left to the care of the servants, without the oversight and foreseeing activity of a mistress. The linen was heaped in disorder, piles on piles in great wide-open cupboards, fine linen sheets and table-cloths crumpled up, the locks prevented from shutting by pieces of torn lace, which no one took the trouble to mend. And yet there were many servants about—negresses in yellow Madras muslin, who came to snatch here a towel, there a table-cloth, walking among the scattered domestic treasures, dragging with their great flat feet frills of fine lace from a petticoat which some lady's-maid had thrown down—thimble here, scissors there—ready to pick up again in a few minutes.

Jansoulet's mother was doubly wounded. The half-rustic artisan in her was outraged in the tenderness, the respect, the sweet unreasonableness the woman of the provinces feels towards a full linen cupboard—a cupboard filled piece by piece, full of relics of past struggles, whose contents grow finer little by little, the first token of comfort, of wealth, in the house. Besides, she had held the distaff from morning till night, and if the housewife in her was angry, the spinner could have wept at the profanation. At last, unable to contain herself longer, she rose, and actively, her little shawl displaced at each movement, she set herself to pick up, straighten, and carefully fold this magnificent linen, as she used to do in the fields of Saint-Romans, when she gave herself the treat of a grand washing-day, with twenty washerwomen, the clothes-baskets flowing over with floating whiteness, and the sheets flapping in the morning wind on the clothes-lines. She was in the midst of this occupation, forgetting her journey, forgetting Paris, even the place where she was, when a stout, thick-set, bearded man, with varnished boots and a velvet jacket, over the torso of a bull, came into the linen-room.

"What! Cabassu!"

"You here, Mme. Françoise! What a surprise!" said the *masseur*, staring like a bronze figure.

"Yes, my brave Cabassu, it is I. I have just arrived;

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and as you see, I am at work already. It made my heart bleed to see all this muddle."

"You came up for the sitting, then?"

"What sitting?"

"Why, the grand sitting of the legislative body. It's to-day."

"Dear me, no. What has that got to do with me? I should understand nothing at all about it. No, I came because I wanted to know my little Jansoulets, and then, I was beginning to feel uneasy. I have written several times without getting an answer. I was afraid that there was a child sick, that Bernard's business was going wrong—all sorts of ideas. At last I got seriously worried, and came away at once. They are well here, they tell me."

"Yes, Mme. Françoise. Thank God, every one is quite well."

"And Bernard. His business—is that going on as he wants it to?"

"Well, you know one has always one's little worries in life—still, I don't think he should complain. But, now I think of it, you must be hungry. I will go and make them bring you something."

He was going to ring, more at home and at ease than the old mother herself. She stopped him.

"No, no, I don't want anything. I have still something left in my basket." And she put two figs and a crust of bread on the edge of the table. Then, while she was eating: "And you, lad, your business? You look very much sprucer than you did the last time you were at Bourg. How smart you are! What do you do in the house?"

"Professor of massage," said Aristide gravely.

"Professor—you?" said she with respectful astonishment; but she did not dare ask him what he taught, and Cabassu, who felt such questions a little embarrassing, hastened to change the subject.

"Shall I go and find the children? Haven't they told them that their grandmother is here?"

"I didn't want to disturb them at their work. But I believe it must be over now—listen!"

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Behind the door they could hear the shuffling impatience of the children anxious to be out in the open air, and the old woman enjoyed this state of things, doubling her maternal desire, and hindering her from doing anything to hasten its pleasure. At last the door opened. The tutor came out first—a priest with a pointed nose and great cheek-bones, whom we have met before at the great *déjeuners*. On bad terms with his bishop, he had left the diocese where he had been engaged, and in the precarious position of an unattached priest—for the clergy have their Bohemians too—he was glad to teach the little Jansoulets, recently turned out of the Bourdaloue College. With his arrogant, solemn air, overweighted with responsibilities, which would have become the prelates charged with the education of the dauphins of France, he preceded three curled and gloved little gentlemen in short jackets, with leather knapsacks, and great red stockings reaching half-way up their little thin legs, in complete suits of cyclist dress, ready to mount.

"My children," said Cabassu, "that is Mme. Jansoulet, your grandmother, who has come to Paris expressly to see you."

They stopped in a row, astonished, examining this old wrinkled visage between the folds of her cap, this strange dress of a simplicity unknown to them; and their grandmother's astonishment answered to theirs, complicated with a heart-breaking discomfiture and constraint in dealing with these little gentlemen, as stiff and disdainful as any of the nobles or ministers whom her son had brought to Saint-Romans. On the bidding of their tutor "to salute their venerable grandmother," they came in turn to give her one of those little half-hearted shakes of the hand of which they had distributed so many in the garrets they had visited. The fact is that this good woman, with her agricultural appearance and clean but very simple clothes, reminded them of the charity visits of the College Bourdaloue. They felt between them the same unknown quality, the same distance, which no remembrance, no word of their parents had ever helped to bridge. The abbé felt this constraint, and tried to dispel it—speaking with the tone of voice and ges-

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tures customary to those who always think they are in the pulpit.

"Well, madame, the day has come, the great day when Jansoulet will confound his enemies—*confundantur hostes mei, quia injuste iniquitatem fecerunt in me*—because they have unjustly persecuted me."

The old lady bent religiously before the Latin of the Church, but her face expressed a vague expression of uneasiness at this idea of enemies and of persecutions.

"These enemies are powerful and numerous, my noble lady, but let us not be alarmed beyond measure. Let us have confidence in the decrees of Heaven and in the justice of our cause. God is in the midst of it, it shall not be overthrown—*in medio ejus non commovebitur.*"

A gigantic negro, resplendent with gold braid, interrupted him by announcing that the bicycles were ready for the daily lesson on the terrace of the Tuileries. Before setting out, the children again shook solemnly their grandmother's wrinkled and hardened hand. She was watching them go, stupefied and oppressed, when all at once, by an adorable spontaneous movement, the youngest turned back when he had got to the door and, pushing the great negro aside, came to throw himself head foremost, like a little buffalo, into Mme. Jansoulet's skirts, squeezing her to him, while holding out his smooth forehead, covered with brown curls, with the grace of a child offering its kiss like a flower. Perhaps this one, nearer the warmth of the nest, the cradling knees of the nurses with their peasant songs, had felt the maternal influence, of which the Levantine had deprived him, reach his heart. The old woman trembled all over with the surprise of this instinctive embrace.

"Oh! little one, little one," said she, seizing the little silky, curly head which reminded her so much of another, and she kissed it wildly. Then the child unloosed himself, and ran off without saying anything, his head moist with hot tears.

Left alone with Cabassu, the mother, comforted by this embrace, asked some explanation of the priest's words. Had her son many enemies?

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"Oh!" said Cabassu, "it is not astonishing, in his position."

"But what is this great day—this sitting of which you all speak?"

"Well, then, it is to-day that we shall know whether Bernard will be deputy or no."

"What? He is not one now, then? And I have told them everywhere in the country. I illuminated Saint-Romans a month ago. Then they have made me tell a lie."

The *masseur* had a great deal of trouble in explaining to her the parliamentary formalities of the verification of elections. She only listened with one ear, walking up and down the linen-room feverishly.

"That's where my Bernard is now, then?"

"Yes, madame."

"And can women go to the Chamber? Then why is his wife not there? For one does not need telling that it is an important matter for him. On a day like this he needs to feel all those whom he loves at his side. See, my lad, you must take me there, to this sitting. Is it far?"

"No, quite near. Only, it must have begun already. And then," added he, a little disconcerted, "it is the hour when madame wants me."

"Ah! Do you teach her this thing you are professor of? What do you call it?"

"Massage. We have learned it from the ancients. Yes, there she is ringing for me, and some one will come to fetch me. Shall I tell her you are here?"

"No, no; I prefer to go there at once."

"But you have no admission ticket."

"Bah! I will tell them I am Jansoulet's mother, come to hear him judged." Poor mother, she spoke truer than she knew.

"Wait, Mme. Françoise. I will give you some one to show you the way, at least."

"Oh, you know, I have never been able to put up with servants. I have a tongue. There are people in the streets. I shall find my way."

He made a last attempt, without letting her see all his

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thought. "Take care; his enemies are going to speak against him in the Chamber. You will hear things to hurt you."

Oh, the beautiful smile of belief and maternal pride with which she answered: "Don't I know better than them all what my child is worth? Could anything make me mistaken in him? I should have to be very ungrateful, then. Get along with you!"

And shaking her head with its flapping cap wings, she set off fiercely indignant.

With head erect and upright bearing the old woman strode along under the great arcades which they had told her to follow, a little troubled by the incessant noise of the carriages, and by the idleness of this walk, unaccompanied by the faithful distaff which had never quitted her for fifty years. All these ideas of enmities and persecutions, the mysterious words of the priest, the guarded talk of Cabassu, frightened and agitated her. She found in them the meaning of the presentiments which had so overpowered her as to snatch her from her habits, her duties, the care of the house and of her invalid. Besides, since Fortune had thrown on her and her son this golden mantle with its heavy folds, Mme. Jansoulet had never become accustomed to it, and was always waiting for the sudden disappearance of these splendours. Who knows if the break-up was not going to begin this time? And suddenly, through these sombre thoughts, the remembrance of the scene that had just passed, of the little one rubbing himself on her woollen gown, brought on her wrinkled lips a tender smile, and she murmured in her peasant tongue:

"Oh, for the little one, at any rate."

She crossed a magnificent square, immense, dazzling, two fountains throwing up their water in a silvery spray, then a great stone bridge, and at the end was a square building with statues on its front, a railing with carriages drawn up before it, people going on, numbers of policemen. It was there. She pushed through the crowd bravely and came up to the high glass doors.

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"Your card, my good woman?"

The "good woman" had no card, but she said quite simply to one of the porters in red who were keeping the door:

"I am Bernard Jansoulet's mother. I have come for the sitting of my boy."

It was indeed the sitting of her boy; for everywhere in this crowd besieging the doors, filling the passages, the hall, the tribune, the whole palace, the same name was repeated, accompanied with smiles and anecdotes. A great scandal was expected, terrible revelations from the chairman, which would no doubt lead to some violence from the barbarian brought to bay, and they hurried to the spot as to a first night or a celebrated trial. The old mother would hardly have been heard in the middle of this crowd, if the stream of gold left by the Nabob wherever he had passed, marking his royal progress, had not opened all the roads to her. She went behind the attendant in this tangle of passages, of folding-doors, of empty resounding halls, filled with a hum which circulated with the air of the building, as if the walls, themselves soaked with babble, were joining to the sound of all these voices the echoes of the past. While crossing a corridor she saw a little dark man gesticulating and crying to the servants:

"You will tell Moussiou Jansoulet that it is I, that I am the Mayor of Sarlazaccio, that I have been condemned to five months' imprisonment for him. In God's name, surely that is worth a card for the sitting."

Five months' imprisonment for her son! Why? Very much disturbed, she arrived at last, her ears singing, at the top of a staircase, where different inscriptions—"Tribune of the Senate, of the Diplomatic Body, of the Deputies"—stood above little doors like boxes in a theatre. She entered, and without seeing anything at first except four or five rows of seats filled with people, and opposite, very far off, separated from her by a vast clear space, other galleries similarly filled. She leaned up against the wall, astonished to be there, exhausted, almost ashamed. A current of hot air which came to her face, a chatter of rising voices, drew her

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towards the slope of the gallery, towards the kind of gulf open in the middle where her son must be. Oh! how she would like to see him. So squeezing herself in, and using her elbows, pointed and hard as her spindle, she glided and slipped between the wall and the seats, taking no notice of the anger she aroused or the contempt of the well-dressed women whose lace and fresh toilettes she crushed; for the assembly was elegant and fashionable. Mme. Jansoulet recognised, by his stiff shirt-front and aristocratic nose, the marquis who had visited them at Saint-Romans, who so well suited his name, but he did not look at her. She was stopped farther progress by the back of a man sitting down, an enormous back which barred everything and forbade her go farther. Happily, she could see nearly all the hall from here by leaning forward a little; and these semi-circular benches filled with deputies, the green hanging of the walls, the chair at the end, occupied by a bald man with a severe air, gave her the idea, under the studious and gray light from the roof, of a class about to begin, with all the chatter and movement of thoughtless schoolboys.

One thing struck her—the way in which all looks turned to one side, to the same point of attraction; and as she followed this current of curiosity which carried away the entire assembly, hall as well as galleries, she saw that what they were all looking at—was her son.

In the Jansoulet's country there is still, in some old churches, at the end of the choir, half-way up the crypt, a stone cell where lepers were admitted to hear mass, showing their dark profiles to the curious and fearful crowd, like wild beasts crouched against the loopholes in the wall. Françoise well remembered having seen in the village where she had been brought up the leper, the bugbear of her infancy, hearing mass from his stone cage, lost in the shade and in isolation. Now, seeing her son seated, his head in his hands, alone, up there away from the others, this memory came to her mind. "One might think it was a leper," murmured the peasant. And, in fact, this poor Nabob was a leper, his millions from the East weighing on him like some terrible and mysterious disease. It happened that the bench

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on which he had chosen to sit had several recent vacancies on account of holidays or deaths; so that while the other deputies were talking to each other, laughing, making signs, he sat silent, alone, the object of attention to all the Chamber; an attention which his mother felt to be malevolent, ironic, which burned into her heart. How was she to let him know that she was there, near him, that one faithful heart beat not far from his? He would not turn to the gallery. One would have said that he felt it was hostile, that he feared to look there. Suddenly, at the sound of the bell from the presidential platform, a rustle ran through the assembly, every head leaned forward with that fixed attention which makes the features unmovable, and a thin man in spectacles, whose sudden rise among so many seated figures gave him the authority of attitude at once, said, opening the paper he held in his hand:

"Gentlemen, in the name of your third committee, I beg to move that the election of the second division of the department of Corsica be annulled."

In the deep silence following this phrase, which Mme. Jansoulet did not understand, the giant seated before her began to puff vigorously, and all at once, in the front row of the gallery, a lovely face turned round to address him a rapid sign of intelligence and approval. Forehead pale, lips thin, eyebrows too black for the white framing of her hat, it all produced in the eyes of the good old lady, without her knowing why, the effect of the first flash of lightning in a storm, and the apprehension of the thunderbolt following the lightning.

Le Merquier was reading his report. The slow, dull, monotonous voice, the drawling, weak Lyonnese accent, while the long form of the lawyer balanced itself in an almost animal movement of the head and shoulders, made a singular contrast to the ferocious clearness of the brief. First, a rapid account of the electoral irregularities. Never had universal suffrage been treated with such primitive and barbarous contempt. At Sarlazaccio, where Jansoulet's rival seemed to have a majority, the ballot-box was destroyed the night before it was counted. The same thing almost hap-

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pened at Levia, at Saint-André, at Avabessa. And it was the mayors themselves who committed these crimes, who carried the urns home with them, broke the seals, tore up the voting papers, under cover of their municipal authority. There had been no respect for the law. Everywhere fraud, intrigue, even violence. At Calcatoggio an armed man sat during the election at the window of a tavern in front of the *mairie*, holding a blunderbuss, and whenever one of Sebastiani's electors (Sebastiani was Jansoulet's opponent) showed himself, the man took aim: "If you come in, I will blow out your brains." And when one saw the inspectors of police, justices, inspectors of weights and measures, not afraid to turn into canvassing agents, to frighten or cajole a population too submissive before all these little tyrannical local influences, was that not proof of a terrible state of things? Even priests, saintly pastors, led astray by their zeal for the poor-box and the restoration of an impoverished building, had preached a mission in favour of Jansoulet's election. But an influence still more powerful, though less respectable, had been called into play for the good cause—the influence of the banditti. "Yes, banditti, gentlemen; I am not joking." And then came a sketch in outline of Corsican banditti in general, and of the Piedigriggio family in particular.

The Chamber listened attentively, with a certain uneasiness. For, after all, it was an official candidate whose doings were thus described, and these strange doings belonged to that privileged land, cradle of the imperial family, so closely attached to the fortunes of the dynasty, that an attack on Corsica seemed to strike at the sovereign. But when people saw the new minister, successor and enemy of Mora, glad of the blow to a *protégé* of his predecessor, smile complacently from the Government bench at Le Merquier's cruel banter, all constraint disappeared at once, and the ministerial smile repeated on three hundred mouths, grew into a scarcely restrained laugh—the laugh of crowds under the rod which bursts out at the least approbation of the master. In the galleries, not usually treated to the picturesque, but amused by these stories of brigands, there was

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general joy, a radiant animation on all these faces, pleased to look pretty without insulting the solemnity of the spot. Little bright bonnets shook with all their flowers and plumes, round gold-encircled arms leaned forward the better to hear. The grave Le Merquier had imported into the sitting the distraction of a show, the little spice of humour allowed in a charity concert to bribe the uninitiated.

Impassible and cold in the midst of his success, he continued to read in his gloomy voice, penetrating like the rain of Lyons:

"Now, gentlemen, one asks how a stranger, a Provençal returned from the East, ignorant of the interests and needs of this island where he had never been seen before the election, a true type of what the Corsican disdainfully calls a 'continental'—how has this man been able to excite such an enthusiasm, such devotion carried to crime, to profanity. His wealth will answer us, his fatal gold thrown in the face of the electors, thrust by force into their pockets with a barefaced cynicism of which we have a thousand proofs." Then the interminable series of denunciations: "I, the undersigned, Croce (Antoine), declare in the interests of truth, that the Commissary of Police Nardi, calling on us one evening, said: 'Listen, Croce (Antoine), I swear by the fire of this lamp that if you vote for Jansoulet you will have fifty francs to-morrow morning.'" And this other: "I, the undersigned, Lavezzi (Jacques-Alphonse), declare that I refused with contempt seventeen francs offered me by the Mayor of Pozzonegro to vote against my cousin Sebastiani." It is probable that for three francs more Lavezzi (Jacques-Alphonse) would have swallowed his contempt in silence. But the Chamber did not look into things so closely.

Indignation seized on this incorruptible Chamber. It murmured, it fidgeted on its padded seats of red velvet, it raised a positive clamour. There were "Oh's" of amazement, eyes lifted in astonishment, brusque movements on the benches, as if in disgust at this spectacle of human degradation. And remark that the greater part of these deputies had used the same electoral methods, that these were the

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heroes of those famous orgies when whole oxen were carried in triumph, ribanded and decorated as at Gargantuan feasts. Just these men cried louder than others, turned furiously towards the solitary seat where the poor leper listened, still and downcast. Yet in the midst of the general uproar, one voice was raised in his favour, but low, unpractised, less a voice than a sympathetic murmur, through which was distinguished vaguely: "Great services to the Corsican population—Considerable works—Territorial Bank."

He who mumbled thus was a little man in white gaiters, an albino head, and thin hair in scattered locks. But the interruption of this unfortunate friend only furnished Le Merquier with a rapid and natural transition. A hideous smile parted his flabby lips. "The honourable M. Sarigue mentions the Territorial Bank. We shall be able to answer him." He seemed in fact to be very familiar with the Paganetti den. In a few neat and lively phrases he threw the light on to the depths of the gloomy cave, showed all the traps, the gulfs, the windings, the snares, like a guide waving his torch above the *oubliettes* of some sinister dungeon. He spoke of the fictitious quarries, of the railways on paper, of the chimeric liners disappearing in their own steam. The frightful desert of the Taverna was not forgotten, nor the old Genoese castle, the office of the steamship agency. But what amused the Chamber most was the story of a swindling ceremony organized by the governor for the piercing of a tunnel through Monte Rotondo, a gigantic undertaking always in project, put off from year to year, demanding millions of money and thousands of workmen, and which was begun in great pomp a week before the election. His report gave the thing a comic air—the first blow of the pickaxe given by the candidate in the enormous mountain covered by ancient forests, the speech of the Prefect, the benediction of the flags with the cries of "Long live Bernard Jansoulet!" and the two hundred workmen beginning the task at once, working day and night for a week; then, when the election was over, leaving the fragments of rock heaped round the abandoned excavation for a laughing-stock—another asylum for the terrible banditti. The game was over. After having

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extorted the shareholders' money for so long, the Territorial Bank this time was used as a means to swindle the electors of their votes. "Furthermore, gentlemen, another detail, with which perhaps I should have begun and spared you the recital of this electoral pasquinade. I learn that a judicial inquiry has been opened to-day into the affairs of the Corsican Bank, and that a serious examination of its books will very probably reveal one of those financial scandals—too frequent, alas! in our days—and in which, for the honour of the Chamber, we would wish that none of our members were concerned."

With this sudden revelation, the speaker stopped a moment, like an actor making his point; and in the heavy silence weighing on the assembly, the noise of a closing door was heard. It was the Governor Paganetti leaving the tribune, his face white, the eyes wide open, his mouth half opened, like some Pierrot scenting in the air a formidable blow. Monpavon, motionless, expanded his shirt-front. The big man puffed violently into the flowers of his wife's little white hat.

Jansoulet's mother looked at her son.

"I have spoken of the honour of the Chamber, gentlemen. On that point I have more to say." Now Le Merquier was reading no longer. After the chairman of the committees, the orator came on the scene, or rather the judge. His face was expressionless, his eyes hidden; nothing lived, nothing moved in all his body save the right arm—the long angular arm with short sleeves—which rose and fell automatically, like a sword of justice, making at the end of each sentence the cruel and inexorable gesture of beheading. And truly it was an execution at which they were present. The orator would leave on one side scandalous legends, the mystery which brooded over this colossal fortune acquired in distant lands, far from all control. But there were in the life of the candidate certain points difficult to clear up, certain details. He hesitated, seemed to select his words; then, before the impossibility of formulating a direct accusation: "Do not let us lower the debate, gentlemen. You have understood me. You know to what infamous

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stories I allude—to what calumnies, I wish I could say; but truth forces me to state that when M. Jansoulet called before your committee, was asked to deny the accusations made against him, his explanations were so vague that, though convinced of his innocence, a scrupulous regard for your honour forced us to reject a candidature so besmirched. No, this man must not sit among you. Besides, what would he do there? Living so long in the East, he has unlearned the laws, the manners, and the usages of his country. He believes in rough and ready justice, in fights in the open street; he relies on the abuses of power, and, worse still, on the venality and crouching baseness of all men. He is the merchant who thinks that everything can be bought at a price—even the votes of the electors, even the conscience of his colleagues."

One should have seen with what naïve admiration these fat deputies, enervated with good fortune, listened to this ascetic, this man of another age, like some Saint-Jerome who had left his Thebaid to overwhelm with his vigorous eloquence, in a full assembly of the Roman Empire, the shameless luxury of the prevaricators and of the *concussionaires*. How well they understood now this grand surname of " My conscience " which the courts had given him. In the galleries the enthusiasm rose higher still. Lovely heads leaned to see him, to drink in his words. Applause went round, bending the bouquets here and there, like the wind in a wheat-field. A woman's voice cried with a little foreign accent, " Bravo! Bravo! "

And the mother?

Standing upright, immovable, concentrated in her desire to understand something of this legal phraseology, of these mysterious allusions, she was there like deaf-mutes who only understand what is said before them by the movement of the lips and the expression of the faces. But it was enough for her to watch her son and Le Merquier to understand what harm one was doing to the other, what perfidious and poisoned meaning fell from this long discourse on the unfortunate man whom one might have believed asleep, except for the trembling of his strong shoulders and the clinching of

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his hands in his hair, while hiding his face. Oh, if she could have said to him: "Don't be afraid, my son. If they all misconstrue you, your mother loves you. Let us come away together. What need have we of them?" And for one moment she could believe that what she was saying to him thus in her heart he had understood by some mysterious intuition. He had just raised and shaken his grizzled head, where the childish curve of his lips quivered under a possibility of tears. But instead of leaving his seat, he spoke from it, his great hands pounded the wood of the desk. The other had finished, now it was his time to answer:

"Gentlemen," said he.

He stopped at once, frightened by the sound of his voice, hoarse, frightfully low and vulgar, which he heard for the first time in public. He must find the words for his defence, tormented as he was by the twitchings of his face, the intonations which he could not express. And if the anguish of the poor man was touching, the old mother up there, leaning, gasping, moving her lips nervously as if to help him to find words, reflected the picture of his torture. Though he could not see her, intentionally turned away from her gallery, as he evidently was, this maternal inspiration, the ardent magnetism of those black eyes, ended by giving him life, and suddenly his words and gestures flowed freely:

"First of all, gentlemen, I must say that I do not defend the methods of my election. If you believe that electoral morals have not been always the same in Corsica, that all the irregularities committed are due to the corrupting influence of my gold and not to the uncultivated and passionate temperament of its people, reject me—it will be justice and I will not murmur. But in this debate other matters have been dealt with, accusations have been made which involve my personal honour, and those, and those alone, I wish to answer." His voice was growing firmer, always broken, veiled, but with some soft cadences. He spoke rapidly of his life, his first steps, his departure for the East. It sounded like an eighteenth century tale of the Barbary corsairs sailing the Latin seas, of Beys and of bold Provençals, as sunburned as crickets, who used to end by marrying

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some sultana and "taking the turban," in the old expression of the Marseillais. "As for me," said the Nabob, with his good-humoured smile, "I had no need of taking the turban to grow rich. I had only to take into this land of idleness the activity and flexibility of a southern Frenchman; and in a few years I made one of those fortunes which can only be made in those hot countries, where everything is gigantic, prodigious, disproportionate, where flowers grow in a night, and one tree produces a forest. The excuse of such fortunes is the manner in which they are used; and I make bold to say that never has any favourite of fortune tried harder to justify his wealth. I have not been successful." No! he had not succeeded. From all the gold he had scattered he had only gathered contempt and hatred. Hatred! Who could boast more of it than he? like a great ship in the dock when its keel touches the bottom. He was too rich, and that stood for every vice, and every crime pointed him out for anonymous vengeances, cruel and incessant enmities.

"Ah, gentlemen," cried the poor Nabob, lifting his clinched hands, "I have known poverty, I have struggled face to face with it, and it is a dreadful struggle, I swear. But to struggle against wealth, to defend one's happiness, honour—rest—to have no shelter but piles of gold which fall and crush you, is something more hideous, more heart-breaking still. Never, in the darkest days of my distress, have I had the pains, the anguish, the sleepless nights with which fortune has loaded me—this horrible fortune which I hate and which stifles me. They call me the Nabob, in Paris. It is not the Nabob they should say, but the Pariah—a social pariah holding out wide arms to a society which will have none of him."

Written down, the words may appear cold; but there, before the assembly, the defence of this man was stamped with an eloquent and grandiose sincerity, which at first, coming from this rustic, this upstart, without culture or education, with the voice of a boatman of the Rhône and the bearing of a hodman, first astonished and then singularly moved his hearers just on account of its wild, uncultivated

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style, foreign to every notion of parliamentary etiquette. Already marks of favour had agitated members, used to the flood of gray and monotonous administrative speech. But at this cry of rage and despair against wealth, uttered by the wretch whom it was enfolding, rolling, drowning in its floods of gold, while he was struggling and calling for help from the depths of his Pactolus, the whole Chamber rose with loud applause, and outstretched hands, as if to give the unfortunate Nabob more testimonies of esteem, of which he was so desirous, and at the same time to save him from shipwreck. Jansoulet felt it; and warmed by this sympathy, he went on, with head erect and confident look:

"You have just been told, gentlemen, that I was unworthy of sitting among you. And he who said it was the last from whom I should have expected it, for he alone knew the sad secret of my life, he alone could speak for me, justify me, and convince you. He has not done it. Well, I will try, whatever it may cost me. Outrageously calumniated before my country, I owe to myself and my children this public justification, and I will make it."

With a brusque movement he turned towards the tribune where he knew his enemy was watching him, and suddenly stopped, full of fear. There, in front of him, behind the pale, malignant head of the baroness, his mother, his mother whom he believed to be two hundred leagues away from the terrible storm, was looking at him, leaning against the wall, bending down her saintly face, flooded with tears, but proud and beaming nevertheless with her Bernard's great success. For it was really a success of sincere human emotion, which a few more words would change into a triumph. Cries of "Go on, go on!" came from all sides of the Chamber to reassure and encourage him. But Jansoulet did not speak. He had only to say: "Calumny has wilfully confused two names. I am called Bernard Jansoulet, the other Jansoulet Louis." Not a word more was needed.

But in the presence of his mother, still ignorant of his brother's dishonour, he could not say it. Respect—family ties forbade it. He could hear his father's voice: "I die of shame, my child." Would not she die of shame too, if he

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spoke? He turned from the maternal smile with a sublime look of renunciation, then in a low voice, utterly discouraged, he said:

"Excuse me, gentlemen; this explanation is beyond my power. Order an investigation of my whole life, open as it is to all, alas! since any one can interpret all my actions. I swear to you that you will find nothing there which unfits me to sit among the representatives of my country."

In face of this defeat, which seemed to everybody the sudden crumbling of an edifice of effrontery, the astonishment and disillusionment were immense. There was a moment of excitement on the benches, the tumult of a vote taken on the spot, which the Nabob saw vaguely through the glass doors, as the condemned man looks down from the scaffold on the howling crowd. Then, after that terrible pause which precedes a supreme moment, the president made, amid deep silence, the simple pronouncement:

"The election of M. Bernard Jansoulet is annulled."

Never had a man's life been cut off with less solemnity or disturbance.

Up there in her gallery, Jansoulet's mother understood nothing, except that the seats were emptying near her, that people were rising and going away. Soon there was no one else there save the fat man and the lady in the white hat, who leaned over the barrier, watching Bernard with curiosity, who seemed also to be going away, for he was putting up great bundles of papers in his portfolio quite calmly. When they were in order, he rose and left his place. Ah! the life of public men had sometimes cruel situations. Gravely, slowly, under the gaze of the whole assembly, he must descend those steps which he had mounted at the cost of so much trouble and money, to whose feet an inexorable fatality was precipitating him.

The Hemerlingues were waiting for this, following to its last stage this humiliating exit, which crushes the unseated member with some of the shame and fear of a dismissal. Then, when the Nabob had disappeared, they looked at each other with a silent laugh, and left the gallery before the old woman had dared to ask them anything, warned by

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her instinct of their secret hostility. Left alone, she gave all her attention to a new speech, persuaded that her son's affairs were still in question. They spoke of an election, of a scrutiny, and the poor mother leaning forward in her red hood, wrinkling her great eyebrows, would have religiously listened to the whole of the report of the Sarigue election, if the attendant who had introduced her had not come to say that it was finished and she had better go away. She seemed very much surprised.

"Indeed! Is it over?" said she, rising almost regretfully.

And quietly, timidly:

"Has he—has he won?"

It was innocent, so touching that the attendant did not even dream of smiling.

"Unfortunately, no, madame. M. Jansoulet has not won. But why did he stop in that way? If it is true that he never came to Paris, and that another Jansoulet did everything they accuse him of, why did he not say so?"

The old mother, turning pale, leaned on the balustrade of the staircase. She had understood.

Bernard's brusque interruption on seeing her, the sacrifice he had made to her so simply—that noble glance as of a dying animal, came to her mind, and the shame of the elder, the favourite child, mingled itself with Bernard's disaster—a double-edged maternal sorrow, which tore her whichever way she turned. Yes, yes, it was on her account he would not speak. But she would not accept such a sacrifice. He must come back at once and explain himself before the deputies.

"My son, where is my son?"

"Below, madame, in his carriage. It was he who sent me to look for you."

She ran before the attendant, walking quickly, talking aloud, pushing aside out of her way the little black and bearded men who were gesticulating in the passages. After the waiting-hall she crossed a great round antechamber where servants in respectful rows made a living wainscotting to the high, blank wall. From there she could see through

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the glass doors, the outside railing, the crowd in waiting, and among the other vehicles, the Nabob's carriage waiting. As she passed, the peasant recognised in one of the groups her enormous neighbour of the gallery, with the pale man in spectacles who had attacked her son, who was receiving all sorts of felicitations for his discourse. At the name of Jansoulet, pronounced among mocking and satisfied sneers, she stopped.

"At any rate," said a handsome man with a bad feminine face, "he has not proved where our accusations were false."

The old woman, hearing that, wrenched herself through the crowd, and facing Moëssard said:

"What he did not say I will. I am his mother, and it is my duty to speak."

She stopped to seize Le Merquier by the sleeve, who was escaping:

"Wicked man, you must listen, first of all. What have you got against my child? Don't you know who he is? Wait a little till I tell you."

And turning to the journalist:

"I had two sons, sir."

Moëssard was no longer there. She returned to Le Merquier: "Two sons, sir." Le Merquier had disappeared.

"Oh, listen to me, some one, I beg," said the poor mother, throwing her hands and her voice round her to assemble and retain her hearers; but all fled, melted away, disappeared—deputies, reporters, unknown and mocking faces to whom she wished at any cost to tell her story, careless of the indifference where her sorrows and her joys fell, her pride and maternal tenderness expressed in a tornado of feeling. And while she was thus exciting herself and struggling—distracted, her bonnet awry—at once grotesque and sublime, as are all the children of nature when brought into civilization, taking to witness of the honesty of her son and the injustice of men, even the liveried servants, whose disdainful impassibility was more cruel than all, Jansoulet appeared suddenly beside her.

"Take my arm, mother. You must not stop there."

He said it in a tone so firm and calm that all the laughter

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ceased, and the old woman, suddenly quieted, sustained by this solid hold, still trembling a little with anger, left the palace between two respectful rows. A dignified and rustic couple, the millions of the son gilding the countrified air of the mother, like the rags of a saint enshrined in a golden *chasse*—they disappeared in the bright sunlight outside, in the splendour of their glittering carriage—a ferocious irony in their deep distress, a striking symbol of the terrible misery of the rich.

They sat well back, for both feared to be seen, and hardly spoke at first. But when the vehicle was well on its way, and he had behind him the sad Calvary where his honour hung gibbeted, Jansoulet, utterly overcome, laid his head on his mother's shoulder, hid it in the old green shawl, and there, with the burning tears flowing, all his great body shaken by sobs, he returned to the cry of his childhood: "Mother."

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XXII

DRAMAS OF PARIS

Que l'heure est donc brève,
Qu'on passe en aimant !
C'est moins qu'un moment,
Un peu plus qu'un rêve.

In the semi-obscurity of a great drawing-room filled with flowers, the seats of the furniture covered with holland, the chandeliers draped with muslin, the windows open, and the venetians lowered, Mme. Jenkins is seated at the piano reading the new song of the fashionable musician; some melodic phrases accompanying exquisite verse, a melancholy *Lied*, unequally divided, which seems written for the tender gravities of her voice and the disturbed state of her soul.

Le temps nous enlève
Notre enchantement

sighs the poor woman, moved by the sound of her own voice, and while the notes float away in the court-yard of the house, where the fountain falls drop by drop among a bed of rhododendrons, the singer breaks off, her hands holding the chord, her eyes fixed on the music, but her look far away. The doctor is absent. The care of his health and business has exiled him from Paris for some days, and the thoughts of the beautiful Mme. Jenkins have taken that grave turn, as often happens in solitude, that analytical tendency which sometimes makes even momentary separations fatal in the most united households. United they had not been for some time. They only saw each other at meal-times, before the servants, hardly speaking unless he, the man of unctuous manners, allowed himself to make some disobliging or brutal remark on her son, or on her age, which she began to show,

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or on some dress which did not become her. Always gentle and serene, she stifled her tears, accepted everything, feigned not to understand; not that she loved him still after so much cruelty and contempt, but it was the story, as their coachman Joe told it, "of an old clinger who was determined to make him marry her." Up to then a terrible obstacle—the life of the legitimate wife—had prolonged a dishonourable situation. Now that the obstacle no longer existed she wished to put an end to the situation, because of André, who from one day to another might be forced to despise his mother, because of the world which they had deceived for ten years—a world she never entered but with beating heart, for fear of the treatment she would receive after a discovery. To her allusions, to her prayers, Jenkins had answered at first by phrases, grand gestures: "Could you distrust me? Is not our engagement sacred?"

He pointed out also the difficulty of keeping an act of this importance secret. Then he shut himself up in a malignant silence, full of cold anger and violent determinations. The death of the duke, the fall of an absurd vanity, had struck a final blow at the household; for disaster, which often brings hearts ready to understand one another nearer, finishes and completes disunions. And it was indeed a disaster. The popularity of the Jenkins pearls suddenly stopped, the situation of the foreign doctor and charlatan, ably defined by Bouchereau in the Journal of the Academy, and people of fashion looked at each other in fright, paler from terror than from the arsenic they had imbibed. Already the Irishman had felt the effect of those counter blasts which make Parisian infatuations so dangerous.

It was for that reason, no doubt, that Jenkins had judged it wise to disappear for some time, leaving madame to continue to frequent the houses still open to them, to gauge and hold public opinion in respect. It was a hard task for the poor woman, who found everywhere the cool and distant welcome which she had received at the Hemerlingues. But she did not complain; thus earning her marriage, she was putting between them as a last resource the sad tie of pity and common trials. And as she knew that she was wel-

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comed in the world on account of her talent, of the artistic distraction she lent to their private parties, she was always ready to lay on the piano her fan and long gloves, to play some fragment of her vast repertory. She worked constantly, passing her afternoons in turning over new music, choosing by preference sad and complicated harmonies, the modern music which no longer contents itself with being an art, but becomes a science, and answers better to our nerves, to our restlessness, than to sentiment.

Daylight flooded the room as a maid brought a card to her mistress: "Heurteux, business agent."

The gentleman was there, he insisted on seeing madame.

"You have told him the doctor is travelling?"

He had been told, but it was to madame he wished to speak.

"To me?"

Disturbed, she examined this rough, crumpled card, this unknown name: "Heurteux." What could it be?

"Well, show him in."

Heurteux, business agent, coming from broad daylight into the semi-obscurity of the room, was blinking with an uncertain air, trying to see. She, on the other hand, saw very distinctly a stiff figure, with iron-gray whiskers and protruding jaw, one of those hangers-on of the law whom one meets round the law courts, born fifty years old, with a bitter mouth, an envious air, and a morocco portfolio under the arm. He sat down on the edge of the chair which she pointed out to him, turned his head to make sure that the servant had gone out, then opened his portfolio methodically to search for a paper. Seeing that he did not speak, she began in a tone of impatience:

"I ought to warn you, sir, that my husband is absent, and that I am not acquainted with his business."

Without any astonishment, his hand in his papers, the man answered: "I know that *M. Jenkins* is absent, madame"—he emphasized more particularly the two words "M. Jenkins"—"especially as I come on his behalf."

She looked at him frightened. "On his behalf?"

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"Alas! yes, madame. The doctor's situation, as you are no doubt aware, is one, for the moment, of very great embarrassment. Unfortunate dealings on the Stock Exchange, the failure of a great financial enterprise in which his money is invested, the *Œuvre de Béthléem* which weighs heavily on him, all these reverses coming at once have forced him to a grave resolution. He is selling his mansion, his horses, everything that he possesses, and has given me a power of attorney for that purpose."

He had at last found what he was looking for—one of those stamped folded papers, interlined and riddled with references, where the impassible law makes itself responsible for so many lies. Mme. Jenkins was going to say: "But I was here. I would have carried out all his wishes, all his orders—" when she suddenly understood by the coolness of her visitor, his easy, almost insolent attitude, that she was included in this clearing up, in the getting rid of the costly mansion and useless riches, and that her departure would be the signal for the sale.

She rose suddenly. The man, still seated, went on: "What I have still to say, madame"—oh, she knew it, she could have dictated to him what he had still to say—"is so painful, so delicate. M. Jenkins is leaving Paris for a long time, and in the fear of exposing you to the hazards and adventures of the new life he is undertaking, of taking you away from a son you cherish, and in whose interest perhaps you had better——"

She heard no more, saw no more, and while he was spinning out his gossamer phrases, given over to despair, she heard the song over and over in her mind, as the last image seen pursues a drowning man:

Le temps nous enlève
Notre enchantement.

All at once her pride returned. "Let us put a stop to this, sir. All your turns and phrases are only an additional insult. The fact is that I am driven out—turned into the street like a servant."

"Oh, madame, madame! The situation is cruel enough,

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don't let us make it worse by hard words. In the evolution of his *modus vivendi* M. Jenkins has to separate from you, but he does so with the greatest pain to himself; and the proposals which I am charged to make are a proof of his sentiments for you. First, as to furniture and clothes, I am authorized to let you take——"

"That will do," said she. She flew to the bell. "I am going out. Quick—my hat, my mantle, anything, never mind what. I am in a hurry."

And while they went to fetch her what she wanted she said:

"Everything here belongs to M. Jenkins. Let him dispose of it as he likes. I want nothing from him. Don't insist; it is useless."

The man did not insist. His mission fulfilled, the rest mattered little to him.

Steadily, coldly, she arranged her hat carefully before the glass, the maid fastening her veil, and arranging on her shoulders the folds of her mantle, then she looked round her and considered for a moment whether she was forgetting anything precious to her. No, nothing—her son's letters were in her pocket, she never allowed them to be away from her.

"Madame does not wish for the carriage?"

"No." And she left the house.

It was about five o'clock. At that moment Bernard Jansoulet was crossing the doorway of the legislative chamber, his mother on his arm; but poignant as was the drama enacted there, this one surpassed it—more sudden, unforeseen, and without any stage effects. A drama between four walls, improvised in Paris day by day. Perhaps it is this which gives that vibration to the air of the city, that tremor which forces the nerves into activity. The weather was magnificent. The streets of the wealthy quarter, large and straight as avenues, shone in the declining light, embellished with open windows, flowery balconies, and patches of green seen on the boulevards, light and soft among the narrow, hard prospects of stone. Mme. Jenkins hurried in this direction, walking aimlessly, in a dull stupor. What a horrible

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crash! Five minutes ago rich, surrounded by all the respect and comfort of easy circumstances. Now—nothing. Not even a roof to sleep under, not even a name. The street!

Where was she to go? What would become of her?

At first she had thought of her son. But, to acknowledge her fault, to blush before her own child, to weep while taking from him the right to console her, was more than she could do. No, there was nothing for her but death. To die as soon as possible, to escape shame by a complete disappearance, to unravel in this way an inextricable situation. But where to die? How? There are so many ways of departure! And she called them all up mentally while she walked. Life flowed around her, its luxury at this time of the year in full flower, round the Madeleine and its market, in a space marked off by the perfume of carnations and roses. On the wide footpath were well-dressed women whose skirts mingled their rustle with the trembling of the young leaves; there was some of the pleasure here of a meeting in a drawing-room, an air of acquaintance among the passers-by, of smiles and discreet greetings in passing. And all at once Mme. Jenkins, anxious lest her features might betray her, fearing what might be thought if any one saw her rushing on so blindly, slackened her pace to the aimless gait of an afternoon walk, stopping here and there. The light materials of the dresses spoke of summer, of the country; a thin skirt for the sandy paths of the parks, gauze-trimmed hats for the seaside, fans, sunshades. Her fixed eyes fastened on these trifles without seeing them; but in a vague and pale reflection in the clear windows she saw her image, lying motionless on the bed of some hotel, the leaden sleep of a poison in her head; or, down there, beyond the walls, among the slime of some sunken boat. Which of the two was better?

She hesitated, considered, compared; then, her decision made, started off with the resolved air of a woman tearing herself regretfully from the temptations of the window. As she moved away, the Marquis de Monpavon, proud and well-dressed, a flower in his coat, saluted her at a distance with

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that sweep of the hat so dear to women's vanity, the well-bred bow, with the hat lifted high above the erect head. She answered him with her pretty Parisian's greeting, expressed in an imperceptible inclination of the body and a smile; and seeing this exchange of politeness in the midst of the spring gaiety, one would never think that the same sinister idea was guiding the two, meeting by chance on the road they were traversing in opposite directions, but to the same end.

The prediction of Mora's valet had come true for the marquis: "We may die or lose power; then there will be a reckoning, and it will be terrible." It was terrible. The former receiver-general had obtained with difficulty a delay of a fortnight to make up his deficiencies, taking the last chance that Jansoulet, with his election confirmed, and with full control over his millions again, would come to the rescue once more. The decision of the Assembly had just taken from him this last hope. As soon as he knew it, he returned to the club calmly, and went up to his room, where Francis was waiting impatiently for him with an important paper just arrived. It was a notification to the Sieur Louis-Marie-Agénor de Monpavon to appear the next day in the office of the Juge d'Instruction. Was it addressed to the censor of the Territorial Bank or to the former receiver-general? In any case, the bold formula of a judicial assignation in the first instance, instead of a private invitation, spoke sufficiently of the gravity of the situation and the firm resolution of Justice.

In view of such an extremity, foreseen and expected for long, he had made his plans. A Monpavon in the criminal courts!—a Monpavon, librarian in a convict prison! Never! He put all his affairs in order, tore up his papers, emptied his pockets carefully, and took something from his toilet-table, so calmly and naturally, that when he said to Francis, as he was going out, "Am going to the baths—That dirty Chamber—Filthy dust"—the servant took him at his word. And the marquis was not lying. His exciting post up there in the dust of the tribune had tired him as much as two nights in the train; and his decision to die associating itself

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with his desire to take a bath, the old Sybarite thought of going to sleep in the bath, like what's his name, and other famous personages of antiquity. And in justice it must be said that not one of these Stoics went to his death more quietly than he.

With a white camellia in his buttonhole, above his rosette of the Legion of Honour, he was going up the Boulevard des Capucines with a light step, when the sight of Mme. Jenkins troubled his serenity for a moment. She had a youthful air, a light in her eyes, something so piquant that he stopped to look at her. Tall and beautiful, with her long dress of black gauze, her shoulders wrapped in a lace mantle, her hat trimmed with a garland of autumn leaves, she disappeared in the midst of other elegant women in the balmy atmosphere; and the thought that his eyes were going to close forever on this delightful sight, whose pleasures he knew so well, saddened Monpavon a little, and took the spring from his step. But a few paces farther on, a meeting of another kind gave him back all his courage.

Some one, threadbare, shamefaced, dazzled by the light, was coming down the Boulevard. It was old Marestang, former senator, former minister, so deeply compromised in the affairs of the "Malta Biscuits," that, in spite of his age, his services, and the great scandal of such a proceeding, he had been condemned to two years of prison, struck off the roll of the Legion of Honour, of which he had been one of the dignitaries. The affair was long ago; the poor wretch had just been let out of prison before his sentence had expired, lost, ruined, not having even the means to gild his trouble, for he had had to pay what he owed. Standing on the curb, he was waiting with bent head till the crowds of carriages should allow him to pass, embarrassed by this stoppage at the fullest spot of the boulevards between the passers-by and the sea of open carriages filled with familiar figures. Monpavon walking near him, caught his timid, uneasy look, imploring a recognition and hiding from it at the same time. The idea that one day he could humiliate himself thus, gave him a shudder of revolt. "Oh! that is not possible!" And straightening himself up and throwing

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out his chest, he kept on his way, firmer and more resolute than before.

M. de Monpavon walks to his death! He goes there by the long line of the boulevards, all on fire in the direction of the Madeleine, where he treads the elastic asphalt once more as a lounger, nose in the air, hands crossed behind. He has time; there is no hurry; he is master of the rendezvous. At each instant he smiles before him, waves a greeting from the ends of his fingers or makes the more formal bow we have just seen. Everything revives him, charms him, the noise of the watering-carts, the awnings of the *cafés*, pulled down to the middle of the foot-paths. The approach of death gives him the feelings of a convalescent accessible to all the delicacy, the hidden poesy of an exquisite hour of summer in the midst of Parisian life—of an exquisite hour—his last, and which he will prolong till night. No doubt it is for that reason that he passes the sumptuous establishment where he ordinarily takes his bath. He does not stop either at the Chinese Baths. He is too well known here. All Paris would know of it the same evening. There would be a scandal of bad taste, much coarse rumour about his death in the clubs and drawing-rooms. And the old sensualist, the well-bred man, wishes to spare himself this shame, to plunge and be swallowed up in the vague anonymity of suicide, like those soldiers who, after great battles, neither wounded, dead, or living, are simply put down as "missing." That is why he has nothing on him which can be recognised, or furnish a hint to the inquiries of the police, why he seeks in this immense Paris the distant quarter where will open for him the terrible but oblivious confusion of the pauper's grave. Already, since Monpavon has been walking, the aspect of the boulevard has changed. The crowd has become compact, more active and preoccupied, the houses smaller, marked with signs of commerce. When the gates of Saint-Denis and Saint-Martin are passed, with their overflow from the faubourgs, the provincial physiognomy of the town accentuates itself. The old beau no longer knows any one, and can congratulate himself on being unknown.

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The shopkeepers looking curiously after him, with his fine linen, his well-cut coat, and good figure, take him for some famous actor strolling on the boulevard—witness of his first triumphs—before the play begins. The wind freshens, the twilight softens the distances, and while the long road behind him still glitters, it grows darker now at every step—like the past, with its retrospections to him who looks back and regrets. It seems to Monpavon that he is walking into blackness. He shivers a little, but does not falter, and continues to walk with erect head and chest thrown out.

M. de Monpavon walks to his death! Now he is entering the complicated labyrinth of noisy streets, where the clatter of the omnibus mingles with the thousand humming trades of the working city, where the heat of the factory chimneys loses itself in the fever of a whole people struggling against hunger. The air trembles, the gutters steam, the houses shake at the passing of the wagons, of the heavy drays rumbling round the narrow streets. On a sudden the marquis stops; he has found what he wanted. Between the black shop of a charcoal-seller and the establishment of a packing-case maker, whose pine boards leaning on the walls give him a little shiver, there is a wide door, surmounted by its sign, the word BATHS on a dirty lantern. He enters, crosses a little damp garden where a jet of water weeps in a rockery. Here is the gloomy corner he was looking for. Who would ever believe that the Marquis de Monpavon had come there to cut his throat? The house is at the end, low, with green blinds and a glass door, with a sham air of a villa. He asks for a bath, and while it is being prepared he smokes his cigar at the window, with the noise of the water behind him, looks at the flower-bed of sparse lilac, and the high walls which inclose it.

At the side there is a great yard, the court-yard of a fire station, with a gymnasium, whose masts and swings, vaguely seen from below, look like gibbets. A bugle-call sounds in the yard, and its call takes the marquis thirty years back, reminds him of his campaigns in Algeria, the high ramparts of Constantine, the arrival of Mora at the regiment, and the duels, and the little parties. Ah! how well

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life began then! What a pity that those cursed cards—ps—ps—ps— Well, it's something to have saved appearances.

"Your bath is ready, sir," said the attendant.

At that moment, breathless and pale, Mme. Jenkins was entering André's studio, where an instinct stronger than her will had brought her—the wish to embrace her child before she died. When she opened the door (he had given her a key) she was relieved to find that he was not there, and that she would have time to calm her excitement, increased as it was by the long walk to which she was so little accustomed. No one was there. But on the table was the little note which he always left when he went out, so that his mother, whose visits were becoming shorter and less frequent on account of the tyranny of Jenkins, could tell where he was, and wait for him or rejoin him easily. The two had not ceased to love each other deeply, tenderly, in spite of the cruelty of life which forced into the relations of mother and son the clandestine precautions of an intrigue.

"I am at my rehearsal," said the note to-day, "I shall be back at seven."

This attention of the son, whom she had not seen for three weeks, yet who persisted in expecting her all the same, brought to the mother's eyes the flood of tears which was suffocating her. She felt as if she had just entered a new world. This little room was so pure, so quiet, so elevated. It kept the last rays of the setting sun on its windows, and seemed, with its bare walls, hewn from a corner of the sky. It was adorned only with one great portrait, hers, nothing but hers, smiling in the place of honour, and again, down there, on the table in a gilt frame. This humble little lodging, so light when all Paris was becoming dark, made an extraordinary impression on her, in spite of the poverty of its sparse furniture, scattered in two rooms, its common chintz, and its chimney garnished with two great bunches of hyacinths—those flowers which are hawked round the streets in barrowsful. What a good and worthy life she could have led by the side of her André! And in her

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mind's eye she had arranged her bed in one corner, her piano in another, she saw herself giving lessons, and caring for the home to which she was adding her share of ease and courageous gaiety. How was it she had not seen that her duty, the pride of her widowhood, was there? By what blindness, what unworthy weakness?

It was a great fault, no doubt, but one for which many excuses might be found in her easy and tender disposition, and the clever knavery of her accomplice, always talking of marriage, hiding from her that he himself was no longer free, and when at last obliged to confess it, painting such a picture of his dull life, of his despair, of his love, that the poor creature, so deeply compromised already, and incapable of one of those heroic efforts which raise the sufferer above false situations, had given way at last, had accepted this double existence, so brilliant and so miserable, built on a lie which had lasted ten years. Ten years of intoxicating success and unspeakable unhappiness—ten years of singing, with the fear of exposure between each verse—where the least remark on irregular unions wounded her like an allusion—where the expression of her face had softened to the air of mild humility, of a guilty woman begging for pardon. Then the certainty that she would be deserted had come to spoil even these borrowed joys, had tarnished her luxury; and what misery, what sufferings borne in silence, what incessant humiliations, even to this last, the most terrible of all!

While she is thus sadly reviewing her life in the cool of the evening and the calm of the deserted house, a gust of happy laughter rose from the rooms beneath; and recalling the confidences of André, his last letter telling the great news, she tried to distinguish among all these fresh and limpid voices that of her daughter Élise, her son's betrothed, whom she did not know, whom she would never know. This reflection added to the misery of her last moments, and loaded them with so much remorse and regret that, in spite of her will to be brave, she wept.

Night comes on little by little. Large shadows cover the sloping windows, where the immense depth of the sky seems

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to lose its colour, and to deepen into obscurity. The roofs seem to draw closer together for the night, like soldiers preparing for the attack. The bells count the hours gravely, while the martins fly round their hidden nests, and the wind makes its accustomed invasion of the rubbish of the old wood-yard. To-night it sighs with the sound of the river, a shiver of the fog; it sighs of the river, to remind the unfortunate woman that it is there she must go. She shivers beforehand in her lace mantle. Why did she come here to reawaken her desire for a life impossible after the avowal she was forced to make? Hasty steps shake the staircase; the door opens precipitately; it is André. He is singing, happy, in a great hurry, for they are waiting dinner for him below. Quick, a little light for the lover to beautify himself. But, as he is striking the match, he feels that some one is in the room—a moving shadow among the shadows at rest.

"Who is there?"

Something answers him like a stifled laugh or a sob. He believes that it is one of his little neighbours, a plot of the children to amuse themselves. He draws near. Two hands, two arms, seize and surround him.

"It is I."

And with a feverish voice, hurrying as if to assure herself, she tells him that she is setting out on a long journey, and that before going——

"A journey! And where are you going?"

"Oh, I do not know. We are going over there, a long way, on business in his own part of the world."

"What! You will not be there for my play? It is in three days. And then, immediately after, my marriage. Come now, he cannot hinder you from coming to my marriage?"

She makes excuses, imagines reasons, but her hands burning between her son's, and her altered voice, tell André that she is not speaking the truth. He is going to strike a light; she prevents him.

"No, no; it is useless. We are better without it. Besides, I have so much to get ready still. I must go away."

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They are both standing up, ready for the separation, but André will not let her go without telling him what is the matter, what tragic care is hollowing that fair face where the eyes—was it an effect of the dusk?—shone with a strange light.

"Nothing; no, nothing, I assure you. Only the idea of not being able to take part in your happiness, your triumph. At any rate, you know I love you; you don't mistrust your mother, do you? I have never been a day without thinking of you: do the same—keep me in your heart. And now kiss me and let me go quickly. I have waited too long."

Another minute and she would not have the strength for what she had to do. She darts forward.

"No, you shall not go. I feel that something extraordinary is happening in your life which you do not want to tell. You are in some great trouble, I am sure. This man has done some infamous thing."

"No, no. Let me go! Let me go!"

But he held her fast.

"Tell me, what is it? Tell me."

Then, whispering in her ear, with a voice tender and low as a kiss:

"He has left you, hasn't he?"

The wretched woman shivers, hesitates.

"Ask me nothing. I will say nothing. Adieu!"

He pressed her to his heart:

"What could you tell me that I do not know already, poor mother? You did not guess, then, why I left six months ago?"

"You know?"

"I know everything. And what has happened to you to-day I have foreseen for long, and hoped for."

"Oh, wretch, wretch that I am, why did I come?"

"Because it is your home, because you owe me ten years of my mother. You see now that I must keep you."

He said all this on his knees, before the sofa on which she had let herself fall, in a flood of tears, and the last painful sobs of her wounded pride. She wept thus for long, her

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child at her feet. And now the Joyeuse family, anxious because André did not come down, hurried up in a troop to look for him. It was an invasion of innocent faces, transparent gaiety, floating curls, modest dress, and over all the group shone the big lamp, the good old lamp with the vast shade which M. Joyeuse solemnly carried, as high, as straight as he could, with the gesture of a caryatid. Suddenly they stopped before this pale and sad lady, who looked, touched to the depths, at all this smiling grace, above all at Élise, a little behind the others, whose conscious air in this indiscreet visit points her out as the *fiancée*.

"Élise, embrace our mother and thank her. She has come to live with her children."

There she is, caught in all these caressing arms, pressed against four little feminine hearts which have missed the shelter of a mother's love for so long; there she is introduced, and so gently, into the luminous circle of the family lamp, widened to allow her to take her place there, to dry her eyes, to warm and brighten her spirit at this steady flame, even in this little studio near the roof, where just now the terrible storm blew so wildly.

He who breathes his last over there, lying in his blood-stained bath, has never known this sacred flame. Egoistical and hard, he has lived up to the last for show, throwing out his chest in a bubble of vanity. And this vanity was what was best in him. It alone had held him firm and upright so long; it alone clinched his teeth on the groans of his last agony. In the damp garden the water drips sadly. The bugle of the firemen sounds the curfew. "Go and look at No. 7," says the mistress, "he will never have done with his bath." The attendant goes, and utters a cry of fright, of horror: "Oh, madame, he is dead! But it is not the same man." They go, but nobody can recognise the fine gentleman who entered a short time ago, in this death's-head puppet, the head leaning on the edge of the bath, a face where the blood mingles with paint and powder, all the limbs lying in the supreme lassitude of a part played to the end—to the death of the actor. Two cuts of the razor across the magnifi-

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cent chest, and all the factitious majesty has burst and resolved itself into this nameless horror, this heap of mud, of blood, of spoiled and dead flesh, where, unrecognisable, lies the man of appearances, the Marquis Louis-Marie-Agénor de Monpavon.

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XXIII

MEMOIRS OF AN OFFICE PORTER—THE LAST LEAVES

I PUT down in haste and with an agitated pen the terrible events of which I have been the plaything for the last few days. This time it is all up with the Territorial and with my ambitious dreams. Disputed bills, men in possession, visits of the police, all our books in the hands of the courts, the governor fled, Bois l'Héry, the director, in prison, another—Monpavon—disappeared. My brain reels in the midst of these catastrophes. And if I had obeyed the warnings of reason, I should have been quietly six months ago at Montbars cultivating my vineyard, with no other care than that of seeing the clusters grow round and golden in the good Burgundian sun, and to gather from the leaves, after the dew, the little gray snails, so excellent when they are fried. I should have built for myself with my savings, at the end of the vineyard, on the height—I can see the place at this moment—a tower in rough stone, like M. Chalmette's, so convenient for an afternoon nap, while the quails are chirping round the place. But always misled by deceiving illusions, I wished to enrich myself, speculate, meddle in finance, chain my fortune to the car of the conquerors of the day; and now here I am back again in the saddest pages of my history, clerk in a bankrupt establishment, my duty to answer a horde of creditors, of shareholders drunk with fury, who load my white hairs with the worst outrages, and would like to make me responsible for the ruin of the Nabob and the flight of the governor; as if I myself was not as cruelly struck by the loss of my four years of arrears, and my seven thousand francs which I had confided to that scoundrel of Paganetti de Porto-Vecchio.

But it is my fate to empty the cup of humiliation and

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degradation to the dregs. Have I not been made to appear before a Juge d'Instruction—I, Passajon, former apparitor of the faculty, with thirty years of faithful service, and the ribbon of Officer of the Academy? Oh! when I saw myself going up that staircase of the Palace of Justice, so big, so conspicuous, without a rail to hold by, I felt my head turning and my legs sinking under me. I was forced to reflect there, crossing these halls, black with lawyers and judges, studded with great green doors behind which one heard the imposing noise of the hearings; and up higher, in the corridor of the Juges d'Instruction, during my hour's waiting on a bench, where the prison vermin crawled on my legs, while I listened to a lot of thieves, pickpockets, and loose women talking and laughing with the gendarmes, and the butts of the rifles echo in the passages, and the dull roll of the prison vans. I understood then the danger of "combinations," and that it was not always good to ridicule M. Gogo.

What reassured me, however, was that never having taken any part in the deliberations of the Territorial, I had no share in their dealings and intrigues. But explain this to me: Once in the judge's office, before that man in a velvet cap looking at me across his table with his little eyes like hooks, I felt so pierced through, searched, turned over to the very depth of my being, that, in spite of my innocence, I wanted to confess. Confess what? I don't know. But that is the effect which the law had. This devil of a man spent five minutes looking at me without speaking, all the while turning over a book filled with writing not unknown to me, and suddenly he said, in a mocking and severe tone:

"Well, M. Passajon, how long is it since the affair of the drayman?"

The memory of a certain little misdeed, in which I had taken part in my days of distress, was already so distant that I did not understand at once; but some words of the judge showed me how completely he knew the history of our bank. This terrible man knew everything, down to the least details, the most secret things. Who could have informed him so thoroughly?

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It was all very short, very dry, and, when I wished to enlighten justice with some wise observations, a certain insolent fashion of saying, "Don't make phrases," so much the more wounding at my age and with my reputation of a good talker; also we were not alone in his office. A clerk seated near me was writing down my deposition, and behind I heard the noise of great leaves turning. The judge asked me all sorts of questions about the Nabob—the time when he had made his payments, the place where we kept our books; and all at once, addressing himself to the person whom I could not see: "Show us the cash-book, *M. l'Expert.*"

A little man in a white tie brought the great register to the table. It was M. Joyeuse, the former cashier of Hemerlingue & Sons. But I had not time to offer him my respects.

"Who has done that?" asked the judge, opening the book where a page was torn out. "Don't lie, now."

I did not lie; I knew nothing of it, never having had to do with the books. However, I thought it my duty to mention M. de Géry, the Nabob's secretary, who often came at night into the office and shut himself up for hours casting balances. Then little Father Joyeuse turned red with anger.

"That is an absurdity, M. le Juge d'Instruction. M. de Géry is the young man of whom I have spoken to you. He came to the Territorial as a superintendent, and thought too much of this poor M. Jansoulet to remove the receipts for his payments; that is the proof of his blind but thorough honesty. Besides, M. de Géry, who has been detained in Tunis, is on his way back, and will furnish before long all the explanation necessary."

I felt that my zeal was about to compromise me.

"Take care, Passajon," said the judge. "You are only here as a witness; but if you attempt to mislead justice, you may return a prisoner" (he, the monster, had, indeed, the manner of desiring it). "Come now, consider; who tore out this page?"

Then I very fortunately remembered that some days before he left Paris the governor had made me bring the

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books to his house, where they were all night. The clerk took a note of my declaration, after which the judge dismissed me with a sign, warning me to be ready when I was wanted. Then, on the threshold, he called me back: "Stay, M. Passajon, take this away. I don't want it any more."

He held out the papers he had been consulting while he was questioning me; and judge of my confusion when I saw on the cover the word "Memoirs," written in my best round-hand. I, myself, had provided material to Justice—important details which the suddenness of our catastrophe had prevented me from saving from the police search of our office.

My first idea on returning home was to tear up these indiscreet papers; but on reflection, and after having assured myself that the Memoirs contained nothing that would compromise me, I have decided to go on with them, with the certainty of getting some profit out of them one day or another. There are plenty of novelists at Paris who have no imagination and can only put true stories in their books, who would be glad to buy a little book of incidents. That is how I shall avenge myself on this society of well-to-do swindlers, with which I have been mixed up to my shame and misfortune.

Besides, I must occupy my leisure time. There is nothing to do at the bank, which is completely deserted since the judicial inquiry began, except to arrange the bills of all colours. I have again undertaken the writing for the cook on the second floor, Mlle. Séraphine, from whom I accept in return some little refreshment, which I keep in the strong-box, once more become a provision safe. The wife of the governor is also very good to me, and stuffs my pockets each time I go to see her in her great rooms on the Chaussée d'Antin. There nothing has changed; the same luxury, the same comfort, also a three-months'-old baby—the seventh—and a superb nurse, whose Norman cap is the admiration of the Bois de Boulogne. It seems that once started on the rails of fortune, people need a certain time to slacken their speed or stop. Besides, this thief of a Paganetti had, in case of accident, settled everything on his wife. Perhaps that is

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why this rag-bag of an Italian woman has such an unshakable admiration for him. He has fled, he is in hiding; but she remains convinced that her husband is a little Saint-John of innocence, the victim of his goodness and credulity. One ought to hear her. "You know him, you Moussiou Passajon. You know if he is scrupulous. But as true as there is a God, if my husband had committed such crimes as he is accused of, I myself—you hear me—I myself would put a blunderbuss in his hands, and would say to him, 'Here, Tchecco, blow out your brains!'" and by the way in which she opens the nostrils of her little turned-up nose, her round eyes, black as jet, one feels that this little Corsican would have acted as she spoke. He must be very clever, this infernal governor, to deceive even his wife, to act a part even at home, where the cleverest let themselves be seen as they really are.

In the meantime all these rogues have good dinners; even Bois l'Héry has his meals sent in to the prison from the Café Anglais, and poor old Passajon is reduced to live on scraps picked up in the kitchen. Still we must not grumble too much. There are others more wretched than we are—witness M. Francis, who came in this morning to the Territorial, thin, pale, with dirty linen and frayed cuffs, which he still pulled down by force of habit.

I was at the moment grilling some bacon before the fire in the board-room, my plate laid on the corner of a marqueterie table, with a newspaper underneath to preserve it. I invited Monpavon's valet to share my frugal meal; but since he has waited on a marquis he has come to think that he formed part of the nobility, and he declined with a dignified air, perfectly ridiculous with his hollow cheeks. He began by telling me that he still had no news of his master; that they had sent him away from the club, all the papers under seal, and a horde of creditors like locusts on the marquis's small wardrobe. "So that I am a little short," added M. Francis. That is to say, that he had not the worth of a radish in his pockets, that he had been sleeping for two days on the benches in the streets, awakened at each instant by the police, obliged to rise, to pretend to be drunk so as

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to seek another shelter. As to eating, I believe he had not done so for a long time, for he looked at the food with such hungry eyes as to wring one's heart, and when I insisted on putting before him a slice of bacon and a glass of wine, he fell on it like a wolf. All at once the blood came back to his cheeks and, still eating, he began to chatter.

"You know, *père* Passajon," said he to me between two mouthfuls, "I know where he is. I have seen him."

He winked his eye knowingly. I looked at him in wonder. "Who is it you have seen, M. Francis?"

"The marquis, my master—over there in the little white house behind Notre-Dame." (He did not use the word morgue, it is too low.) "I was sure I should find him there. I went there first thing next morning. There he was. Oh, well disguised, I tell you. Only his valet could recognise him. The hair gray, the teeth gone, the wrinkles showing his sixty-five years, which he used to hide so well. On the marble slab, with the tap running above, I seemed to see him at his dressing-table."

"And you said nothing?"

"No. I knew his intentions on the subject for long. I let him go away discreetly, without awakening attention, as he wished. But, all the same, he might have given me a crust of bread before he went, after a service of twenty years."

And on a sudden, striking the table with his fist with rage:

"When I think that if I had liked I might have been with Mora, instead of going to Monpavon, that I might have had Louis's place. What luck he has had! How many bags of gold he laid his hands on when his duke died! And the wardrobe—hundreds of shirts, a dressing-gown of blue fox fur worth more than twenty thousand francs. Like Noël, too, he must have made his pile! He had to hurry, too, for he knew that it would stop soon. Now there is nothing to be got in the Place Vendôme. An old policeman of a mother who manages everything. Saint-Romans is to be sold, the pictures are to be sold, half the house to be let. It is a real break-up."

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I must confess that I could not help showing my satisfaction, for this wretched Jansoulet is the cause of all our misfortunes. A man who boasted of being so rich, who said so everywhere. The public bit at it like a fish who sees the scales shine through the net. He has lost millions, I admit, but why did he make us believe he had more? They have arrested Bois l'Héry; they should have arrested *him*. Ah! if we had had another expert, I am sure it would have been done. Besides, as I said to Francis, you had only to look at this upstart of a Jansoulet to see what he was worth. What a head—like a bandit!

"And so common," said the ex-valet.

"No principles."

"An absolute want of form. Well, there he is on his beam-ends, and then Jenkins, too, and plenty of others with them."

"What! the doctor too? Ah! so much the worse. Such a polite and amiable man."

"Yes, still another breaking-up of his establishment. Horses, carriages, furniture. The yard of the house is full of bills, and it sounds as empty as if some one were dead. The place at Nanterre is on sale. There were half a dozen of the 'little Bethlehems' left whom they packed up in a cab. It is a break-up, I tell you, *père* Passajon, a ruin which we, old as we are, may not see the end of, but it will be complete. Everything is rotten, it must all come down!"

He was a sinister figure, this old steward of the Empire, thin, stubbly, covered with mud, and shouting like a Jeremiah, "It is the downfall!" with a toothless mouth, black and wide open. I felt afraid and ashamed of him, with a great desire to see him outside, and I thought: "Oh, M. Chalmette! Oh, my little vineyard of Montbars!"

Same date.—Great news. Mme. Paganetti came this afternoon to bring me mysteriously a letter from the governor. He is in London, going to begin a magnificent thing. Fine offices in the best part of the town, a superb list of shareholders. He offers me the chance of joining him, "happy to repair thus the damage he has caused me," says

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he. I shall have twice my wages at the Territorial, be lodged comfortably, five shares in the new bank, and all my arrears paid. All I need is a little money to go there and to pay a few small debts round here. Good luck! My fortune is assured. I shall write to the notary of Montbars to mortgage my vineyard.

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XXIV

AT BORDIGHERA

As M. Joyeuse had told the Juge d'Instruction, Paul de Géry returned from Tunis after three weeks' absence. Three interminable weeks spent in struggling among intrigues, and traps secretly laid by the powerful hatred of the Hemerlingues—in wandering from hall to hall, from ministry to ministry through the immense palace of the Bardo, which gathered within one enclosure, bristling with culverins, all the departments of the State, as much under the master's eye as his stables and harem. On his arrival, Paul had learned that the Chamber of Justice was preparing secretly Jansoulet's trial—a derisive trial, lost beforehand; and the closed offices of the Nabob on the Marine Quay, the seals on his strong boxes, his ships moored to the Goulette, a guard round his palace, seemed to speak of a sort of civil death, of a disputed succession of which the spoils would not long remain to be shared.

There was not a defender, nor a friend, in this voracious crowd; the French colony itself appeared satisfied with the fall of a courtier who had so long monopolized the roads to favour. To attempt to snatch this prey from the Bey, except by a striking triumph at the Assembly, was not to be thought of. All that de Géry could hope for was to save some shreds of his fortune, and this only if he hurried, for he was expecting day by day to learn of his friend's complete ruin.

He set himself to work, therefore, hurried on his business with an activity which nothing could discourage, neither Oriental discursiveness—that refined fair-spoken politeness, under which is hidden ferocity—nor coolly indifferent smiles, nor averted looks, invoking divine fatalism when human lies

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fail. The self-possession of this southerner, in whom was condensed, as it were, all the exuberance of his compatriots, served him as well as his perfect knowledge of French law, of which the Code of Tunis is only a disfigured copy.

By his diplomacy and discretion, in spite of the intrigues of Hemerlingue's son—who was very influential at the Bardo—he succeeded in withdrawing from confiscation the money lent by the Nabob some months before, and to snatch ten millions out of fifteen from Mohammed's rapacity. The very morning of the day on which the money was to be paid over, he received from Paris the news of the unseating of Jansoulet. He hurried at once to the Palace to arrive there before the news, and on his return with the ten millions in bills on Marseilles secure in his pocket-book, he passed young Hemerlingue's carriage, with his three mules at full gallop. The thin owl's face was radiant. De Géry understood that if he remained many hours at Tunis his bills ran the risk of being confiscated, so took his place at once on an Italian packet which was sailing next morning for Genoa, passed the night on board, and was only easy in his mind when he saw far behind him white Tunis with her gulf and the rocks of Cape Carthage spread out before her. On entering Genoa, the steamer while making for the quay passed near a great yacht with the Tunisian flag flying. De Géry felt greatly excited, and for a moment believed that she had come in pursuit of him, and that on landing he might be seized by the Italian police like a common thief. But the yacht was swinging peacefully at anchor, her sailors cleaning the deck or repainting the red siren of her figurehead, as if they were expecting some one of importance. Paul had not the curiosity to ask who this personage was. He crossed the marble city, and returned by the coast railway from Genoa to Marseilles—that marvellous route where one passes suddenly from the blackness of the tunnels to the dazzling light of the blue sea.

At Savona the train stopped, and the passengers were told that they could go no farther, as one of the little bridges over the torrents which rush from the mountains to the sea had been broken during the night. They must

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wait for the engineer and the break-down gang, already summoned by telegraph; wait perhaps a half day. It was early morning. The Italian town was waking in one of those veiled dawns which forecast great heat for the day. While the dispersed travellers took refuge in the hotels, installed themselves in the *cafés*, and others visited the town, de Géry, chafing at the delay, tried to think of some means of saving these few hours. He thought of poor Jansoulet, to whom the money he was bringing might save honour and life, of his dear Aline, her whose remembrance had not quitted him a single day of his journey, no more than the portrait which she had given him. Then he was inspired to hire one of the four-horse *calesinos* which run from Genoa to Nice, along the Italian Corniche—an adorable trip which foreigners, lovers, and winners at Monaco often enjoy. The driver guaranteed that he would be at Nice early; and even if he arrived no earlier than the train, his impatient spirit felt the comfort of movement, of feeling at each turn of the wheel the distance from his desire decrease.

On a fine morning in June, when one is young and in love, it is a delicious intoxication to tear behind four horses over the white Corniche road. To the left, a hundred feet below, the sea sparkling with foam, from the rounded rocks of the shore to those vapoury distances where the blue of the waves and of the heavens mingle; red or white sails are scattered over it like wings, steamers leaving behind them their trail of smoke; and on the sands, fishermen no larger than birds, in their anchored boats like nests. Then the road descends, follows a rapid declivity along the rocks and sharp promontories. The fresh wind from the waves shakes the little harness bells; while on the right, on the side of the mountain, the rows of pine-trees, the green oaks with roots capriciously leaving the arid soil, and olive-trees growing on their terraces, up to a wide and white pebbly ravine, bordered with grass, marking the passage of the waters. This is really a dried-up water-course, which the loaded mules ascend with firm foot among the shingle, and a washer-woman stoops near a microscopic pond—the few drops that remained of the great inundation of winter. From time to

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time one crosses the street of some village, or little town rather, grown rusty through too much sun, of historic age, the houses closely packed and joined by dark arcades—a network of vaulted courts which clamber the hillside with glimpses of the upper daylight, here and there letting one see crowds of children with aureoles of hair, baskets of brilliant fruit, a woman coming down the road, her water-pot on her head and her distaff on her arm. Then at a corner of the street, the blue sparkle of the waves and the immensity of nature.

But as the day advanced, the sun rising in the heavens spread over the sea—now escaped from its mists, still with the transparence of quartz—thousands of rays striking the water like arrow-heads, a dazzling sight, made doubly so by the whiteness of the rocks and of the soil, by a veritable African sirocco which raised the dust in a whirlwind on the road. They were coming to the hottest and most sheltered places of the Corniche—a true exotic temperature, scattering dates, cactus, and aloes. Seeing these thin trunks, this fantastic vegetation in the white hot air, feeling the blinding dust crackle under the wheels like snow, de Géry, his eyes half closed, dreaming in this leaden noon, thought he was once more on that fatiguing road from Tunis to the Bardo, in a singular medley of Levantine carriages with brilliant liveries, of long-necked camels, of caparisoned mules, of young donkeys, of Arabs in rags, of half-naked negroes, of officials in full-dress with their guard of honour. Should he find there, where the road ran through the gardens of palm-trees, the strange and colossal architecture of the Bey's palace, its barred windows with closed lattices, its marble gates, its balconies in carved wood painted in bright colours?— It was not the Bardo, but the lovely country of Bordighera, divided, like all those on the coast, into two parts—the sea town lying on the shore; and the upper town, joined to it by a forest of motionless palm-trees, with upright stem and falling crown—like green rockets, springing into the blue with their thousand feathers.

The insupportable heat, the overtired horses, forced the traveller to stop for a couple of hours at one of those great

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hotels which line the road, and bring every November into this little town, so marvellously sheltered, the luxurious life and cosmopolitan animation of an aristocratic wintering place. But at this time of year there was no one in the sea town of Bordighera but fishermen, invisible at this hour. The villas and hotels seemed dead, their blinds and shutters closed. They took Paul through long, cool, and silent passages to a great drawing-room facing north, which seemed to be part of the suites let for the season, whose doors communicated with the other rooms. White curtains, a carpet, the comfort demanded by the English even when travelling, and outside the windows, which the hotel-keeper opened wide to tempt the traveller to a longer stay, a splendid view of the mountain. An astonishing quiet reigned in this great deserted inn, with neither manager, nor cook, nor waiters—the whole staff coming only in the winter—and given up for domestic needs to a local spoil-sauce, expert at a *stoffato*, a *risotto*; also to two stablemen, who clothed themselves at meal-time with the dress-coat and white tie of office. Happily, de Géry was only going to remain there for an hour or two, to rest his eyes from the overpowering light, his head from the dolorous grip of the sun.

From the divan where he lay, the admirable landscape, diversified with light and trembling olives, woods of the darker orange-trees with shining leaves, seemed to descend to his window by stâges of different greens, where scattered villas shone white, and among them that of Maurice Trott, the banker, recognisable by its capricious architecture and the height of its palms.

The Levantine house, whose gardens came up to the windows of the hotel, had sheltered for some months an artistic celebrity, the sculptor Bréhat, who was dying of consumption, and owed the prolonging of his existence to this princely hospitality. The neighbourhood of this dying celebrity—of which the hotel-keeper was proud, and which he would have liked to charge in the bill—the name of Bréhat, which de Géry had so often heard pronounced with admiration in Félicia Ruys's studio, brought back his thoughts to the beautiful face, with its pure lines, which he

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had last seen in the Bois de Boulogne, leaning on Mora's shoulder. What had become of the unfortunate girl when this prop had failed her? Would this lesson be of use to her in the future? And, by a strange coincidence, while he was thinking thus of Félicia, a great white greyhound was bounding up an alley of green trees on the slopes of the neighbouring garden. It was like Kadour—the same short hair, the same mouth, red, fierce, and delicate. Paul, before his open window, was assailed in a moment by all sorts of visions, sad or charming. Perhaps the beauty of the scene before his eyes made his thoughts wander. Under the orange-trees and lemon-trees in rows, laden with their golden fruit, stretched immense fields of violets in regular and packed beds, separated by little irrigation canals, whose white stone cut up the exuberant verdure.

An exquisite odour of violets dried in the sun was rising —a hot boudoir scent, enervating, enfeebling, which called up for de Géry feminine visions—Aline, Félicia—permeating the fairy-like landscape, in this blue-charged atmosphere, this heavenly day, which one might have called the perfume become visible of so many open flowers. The creaking of a door made him open his eyes. Some one had just gone into the next room. He heard the rustle of a dress against the thin partition, a leaf turned in a book which could not be very interesting, for a long sigh turning into a yawn made him start. Was he still sleeping, dreaming? Had he not heard the cry of the "jackal in the desert," so much in keeping with the burning temperature out of doors? No—nothing more. He fell asleep again, and this time all the confused images which pursued him fixed themselves in a dream—a very pleasant dream.

He was on his honeymoon with Aline. She was a delicious wife, her clear eyes full of love and faith, which only knew, only looked at him. In this very room, on the other side of the partition, she was sitting in white morning dress, which smelt of violets and of the fine lace of her trousseau. They were having breakfast—one of those solitary breakfasts of a honeymoon, served in their bedroom, opposite the blue sea, and the clear sky, which tinge with azure the glass

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in which one drinks, the eyes where one sees one's self, the future—life—the distant horizon. Oh! how good it was; what a divine youth-giving light; how happy they were!

And all at once, in the delight of their kisses, Aline became sad. Her eyes filled with tears. She said to him: "Félicia is there. You will love me no longer." And he laughed, "Félicia here? What an idea!" "Yes, yes; she is there." Trembling she pointed to the next room, from which came angry barks, and the voice of Félicia: "Here, Kadour! Here, Kadour!" the low, concentrated, furious voice of some one who is hiding and suddenly discovered.

Wide awake, the lover, disenchanted, found himself in his empty room, before an empty table, his dream fled through the window to the great hillside. But he heard very distinctly in the next room the bark of a dog, and hurried knocks on the door.

"Open the door! It is I—it is Jenkins."

Paul sat up on his divan, stupefied. Jenkins here? How was that? To whom was he speaking? What voice was going to answer him? No one answered. A light step went to the door, and the lock creaked nervously.

"Here you are at last," said the Irishman, entering.

And truly if he had not taken care to announce himself, Paul would never have taken this brutal, violent, hoarse voice heard through the partition for the doctor's with his sugary manners.

"At last I have found you after a week of searching, of mad rushing from Genoa to Nice, from Nice to Genoa. I knew that you had not gone, because the yacht was in the harbour, and I was going to inspect all the inns on the coast, when I remembered Bréhat. I thought that you would want to see him in passing. I have just come from him. It was he who told me you were here."

But to whom was he speaking? Who was so singularly obstinate? At last a beautiful, sad voice, which Paul well knew, made the hot afternoon air vibrate.

"Well, yes, Jenkins, here I am. What is the matter?"

Through the wall Paul could see the disdainful mouth, turned down with disgust.

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"I have come to prevent you from going—from doing this foolish thing."

"What foolish thing? I have some work at Tunis. I must go there."

"But you don't think, my dear child, that——"

"Oh, enough of your fatherly airs, Jenkins. We know what lies underneath it. Speak to me as you did just now. I prefer the bull-dog to the spaniel. I fear it less."

"Well, I tell you that you must be mad to go over there alone, young and beautiful as you are."

"And am I not always alone? Would you like me to take Constance, at her age?"

"Or me?"

"You!" She pronounced the word with an ironical laugh. "And what about Paris? And your patients —deprive society of its Cagliostro? Never, on any account."

"I have, however, made up my mind to follow you wherever you go," said Jenkins resolutely.

There was an instant of silence. Paul asked himself if it was worthy of him to listen to this conversation which was full of terrible revelations. But in spite of his fatigue an invincible curiosity nailed him to the spot. It seemed to him that the enigma which had so long been perplexing and troubling him was going to be solved at last, to show the woman, sad or perverse, concealed by the fashionable artist. He remained there, still holding his breath, needlessly, however; for the two, believing themselves to be alone in the hotel, let their passions and their voices rise without constraint.

"Well, what do you want of me?"

"I want you."

"Jenkins!"

"Yes, yes, I know; you have forbidden me to say such words before you, but other men than I have said them, and nearer still."

"And if it were so, wretch! If I have not been able to protect myself from disgust and boredom, if I have lost my pride, is it for you to say a word? As if you were not the

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cause of it; as if you had not forever saddened and darkened my life for me!"

And these burning and rapid words revealed to the terrified Paul de Géry the horrible meaning of this apparently affectionate guardianship, against which the mind, the thought, the dreams of the young girl had had to struggle so long, and which had left her the incurable sadness of precocious regret, the heart-break of a life hardly begun.

"I loved you! I love you still! Passion excuses everything," answered Jenkins in a hollow voice.

"Love me, then, if that amuses you. As for me, I hate you not only for the wrong you have done me, all the beliefs and energy you have killed in me, but because you represent what is most execrable, most hideous under the sun—hypocrisy and lies. This society masquerade, this heap of falsity, of grimaces, of cowardly and unclean conventions have sickened me to such an extent, that I am running away, exiling myself so as to see them no longer; rather than them I would have the prison, the sewer, the streets. And yet it is your deceit, O sublime Jenkins, which horrifies me most. You have mingled our French hypocrisy, all smiles and politeness, with your large English shakes of the hand, with your cordial and demonstrative loyalty. They have all been caught by it. They said, 'The good Jenkins; the worthy, honest Jenkins.' But I—I knew you, and in spite of your fine motto on the envelopes of your letters, on your seal, your sleeve-links, your hat-bands, the doors of your carriage, I always saw the rascal you are."

Her voice hissed through her teeth, clinched by an incredible ferocity of expression, and Paul expected some furious revolt of Jenkins under so many insults. But this hate and contempt of the woman he loved must have given him more sorrow than anger, for he answered softly, in a tone of wounded gentleness:

"Oh! you are cruel. If you knew the pain you are giving me! Hypocrite! yes, it is true; but I was not born like that. One is forced into it by the difficulties of life. When one has the wind against one, and wishes to ad-

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vance, one tacks. I have tacked. Lay the blame on my miserable beginnings, my false entry into existence, and agree at least that one thing in me has never lied—my passion! Nothing has been able to kill it—neither your disdain, nor your abuse, nor all that I have read in your eyes, which for so many years have not once smiled at me. It is still my passion which gives me the strength, even after what I have just heard, to tell you why I am here. Listen! You told me once that you wanted a husband—some one who would watch over you during your work, who would take over some of the duties of the poor Crenmitz. Those were your own words, which wounded me then because I was not free. Now all is changed. Will you marry me, Félicia?"

"And your wife?" cried the young girl, while Paul was asking himself the same question.

"My wife is dead."

"Dead? Mme. Jenkins? Is it true?"

"You never knew her of whom I speak. The other was not my wife. When I met her I was already married in Ireland—years before. A horrible forced marriage. My dear, when I was twenty-five I was confronted with this alternative: a debtor's prison or Miss Strang, an ugly and gouty old maid, sister of the usurer who had lent me five hundred pounds to pay for my medical studies. I preferred the prison; but after weeks and months I came to the end of my courage, and I married Miss Strang, who brought me for dowry—my note of hand. You can guess what my life was between these two monsters who adored each other. A jealous, impotent wife. The brother spied on me, following me everywhere. I should have gone away, but one thing kept me there. The usurer was said to be very rich. I wished to have some return for my cowardice. You see, I tell you all. Come now, I have been punished. Old Strang died insolvent; he used to gamble, had ruined himself without saying a word. Then I put my wife and her rheumatism in a hospital, and came to France. I had to begin existence again, more struggles and misery. But I had experience on my side, hatred and contempt for men, and my

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newly conquered liberty, for I did not dream that the horrible weight of this cursed union was going to hinder my getting on, at that distance. Happily, it is over—I am free."

"Yes, Jenkins, free. But why do you not make your wife the poor creature who has shared your life so long, so humble and devoted as she is?"

"Oh!" said he, with an outburst of sincerity, "between my two prisons I would prefer the other, where I could be frankly indifferent. But the atrocious comedy of conjugal love, of unwearying happiness, when for so long I had loved you and thought of you alone! There is not such a torture on earth. If I can guess, the poor woman must have uttered a cry of relief and happiness at the separation. It is the only adieu I hoped for from her."

"But who forced you to such a thing?"

"Paris, society, the world. Married by its opinion, we were held by it."

"And now you are held no longer?"

"Now something comes before all—it is the idea of losing you, of seeing you no longer. Oh! when I learned of your flight, when I saw the bill over your door TO LET, I felt sure that it was all up with poses and grimaces, that I had nothing else to do but to set out, to run quickly after my happiness, which you were taking away. You were leaving Paris—I have left it. Everything of yours was being sold; everything of mine will be sold."

"And she?" said Félicia trembling. "She, the irreproachable companion, the honest woman whom no one has ever suspected, where will she go? What will she do? And it is her place you have just offered me. A stolen place, think what a hell! Well, and your motto, good Jenkins, virtuous Jenkins, what shall we do with it? *'Le bien sans espérance,'* eh!"

At this sneer, cutting his face like a whip, the wretch answered panting:

"That will do! Do not sneer at me so. It is too horrible now. Does it not touch you, then, to be loved as I love you in sacrificing everything to you—fortune, honour,

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respect? See, look at me. I have snatched my mask off for you, I have snatched it off before all. And now, see, here is the hypocrite."

He heard the muffled noise of two knees falling on the floor. And stammering, distracted with love, weak before her, he begged her to consent to this marriage, to give him the right to follow her everywhere, to defend her. Then the words failed him, stifled in a passionate sob, so deep, so lacerating that it should have touched any heart, above all among this splendid impassible scenery in this perfumed heat. But Félicia was not touched. "Let us have done, Jenkins," said she brusquely. "What you ask is impossible. We have nothing to hide from each other, and after your confidences just now, I wish to make one to you, which humbles my pride, but your degradation makes you worthy. I was Mora's mistress."

Paul knew this. And yet it was so sad to hear this beautiful, pure voice laden with such a confession, in the midst of the intoxicating air, that he felt his heart contract.

"I knew it," answered Jenkins in a low voice, "I have the letters you wrote to him."

"My letters?"

"Oh, I will give them to you—here. I know them by heart. I have read and reread them. It is that which hurts one, when one loves. But I have suffered other tortures. When I think that it was I—" He stopped himself. He choked. "I who had to furnish fuel for your flames, warm this frozen lover, send him to you ardent and young— Ah! he has devoured my pearls—I might refuse over and over again, he was always taking them. At last I was mad. You wish to burn, wretched woman. Well, burn, then!"

Paul rose to his feet in terror. Was he going to hear the confession of a crime? But the shame of hearing more was not inflicted on him. A violent knocking, this time on his own door, warned him that his *calesino* was ready.

"Is the French gentleman ready?"

In the next room there was silence, then a whisper.—There had been some one near who had heard them.—Paul

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de Géry hurried downstairs. He must get out of this room to escape the weight of so much infamy.

As the post-chaise swayed, he saw among the common white curtains, which float at all the windows in the south, a pale figure with the hair of a goddess, and great burning eyes fixed on him. But a glance at Aline's portrait quickly dispelled this disturbing vision, and forever cured of his old love, he travelled until evening through the magic landscape with the lovely bride of the *déjeuner*, who carried in the folds of her modest robe and mantle all the violets of Bordighera.

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XXV

THE FIRST NIGHT OF "REVOLT"

"TAKE your places for the first act!"

The cry of the stage-manager, standing with his hand raised to his mouth to form a trumpet, at the foot of the staircase behind the scenes, echoes under the roof, rises and rolls along, to be lost in the depths of corridors full of the noise of doors banging, of hasty steps, of desperate calls to the *coiffeur* and the dressers; while there appear one by one on the landings of the various floors, slow and majestic, without moving their heads for fear of disturbing the least detail of their make-up, all the personages of the first act of *Revolt*, in elegant modern ball costumes, with the creaking of new shoes, the silken rustle of the trains, the jingling of rich bracelets pushed up the arm while gloves are being buttoned. All these people seem excited, nervous, pale beneath their paint, and under the skilfully prepared satin-like surface of the shoulders, tremors flutter like shadows. Dry-mouthed, they speak little. The least nervous, while affecting to smile, have in their eyes and voice the hesitation that marks an absent mind—that apprehension of the battle behind the foot-lights which is ever one of the most powerful attractions of the comedian's art, its piquancy, its freshness.

The stage is encumbered by the passage to and fro of machinists and scene-shifters hastening about, running into one another in the dim, pallid light falling from above, which will give place directly, as soon as the curtain rises, to the dazzling of the foot-lights. Cardailhac is there in his dress-coat and white tie, his opera hat on one side, giving a final glance to the arrangement of the scenery, hurrying the workmen, complimenting the *ingénue* who is waiting dressed and

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ready, beaming, humming an air, looking superb. To see him no one would ever guess the terrible worries which distract him. He is compromised by the fall of the Nabob—which entails the loss of his directorate—and is risking his all on the piece of this evening, obliged, if it be not a success, to leave the cost of this marvellous scenery, these stuffs at a hundred francs the yard, unpaid. It is a fourth bankruptcy that stares him in the face. But, bah! our manager is confident. Success, like all the monsters that feed on men, loves youth; and this unknown author, whose name is appearing for the first time on a theatre bill, flatters the gambler's superstitions.

André Maranne feels less confident. As the hour for the production of the piece approaches he loses faith in his work, terrified by the sight of the house, at which he looks through the hole in the curtain as through the narrow lens of a stereoscope.

A splendid house, crammed to the roof, notwithstanding the late period of the spring and the fashionable taste for early departure to the country; a house that Cardailhac, a declared enemy of nature and the country, endeavouring always to keep Parisians in Paris till the latest possible date, has succeeded in crowding and making as brilliant as in midwinter. Fifteen hundred heads are swarming beneath the great central chandelier, erect—bent forward—turning round—questioning amid a great play of shadows and reflections; some massed in the obscure corners of the floor, others in a bright light reflected through the open doors of the boxes from the white walls of the corridor; the first-night public which is always the same, that brigand-like *tout Paris* which goes everywhere, carrying those envied places by storm when a favour or a claim by right of some official position fails to secure them.

In the stalls are low-cut waistcoats, clubmen, shining bald heads, wide partings in scanty hair, light-coloured gloves, big opera-glasses raised and directed towards various points. In the galleries a mixture of different social sets and all kinds of dress, all the people well known as figuring at this kind of solemnity, and the embarrassing promiscuity

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which places the modest smile of the virtuous woman alongside of the black-ringed eyes, the vermilion-painted lips of her who belongs to another category. White hats, pink hats, diamonds and paint. Above, the boxes present the same confusion; actresses and women of the demi-monde, ministers, ambassadors, famous authors, critics—these last wearing a grave air and frowning brow, sitting crosswise in their *fauteuils* with the impassive haughtiness of judges whom nothing can corrupt. The boxes near the stage especially stand out in the general picture brilliantly lighted, occupied by celebrities of the financial world, the women *décolleté* and with bare arms, glittering with jewels like the Queen of Sheba on her visit to the King of Judea. But on the left, one of these large boxes, entirely empty, attracts attention by reason of its curious decoration, lighted from the back by a Moorish lantern. Over the whole assembly is an impalpable and floating dust, the flickering of the gas, that odour that mingles with all the pleasures of Paris, its little sputterings, sharp and quick like the breaths drawn by a consumptive, accompanying the movement of opened fans. And then, too, *ennui*, a gloomy *ennui*, the *ennui* of seeing the same faces always in the same places, with their defects or their poses, that uniformity of fashionable gatherings which ends by establishing in Paris each winter a spiteful and gossiping provincialism more petty than that of the provinces themselves.

Maranne observed this ill-humour, this lassitude of the public, and thinking of all the changes which the success of his play might bring about in his simple life, he asked himself, full of a great anxiety, what he could do to bring his ideas home to those thousands of people, to pluck them away from their preoccupation, and to send through this crowd a single current which should draw to himself those absent glances, those minds of every different calibre, so difficult to move to unison. Instinctively his eyes sought friendly faces, a box facing the stage occupied by the Joyeuse family; Élise and the younger girls seated in the front, Aline and the father in the row behind—a charming family group, like a bouquet wet with dew amid a display of arti-

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ficial flowers. And while all Paris was disdainfully asking, "Who are those people there?" the poet intrusted his fate to those little fairy hands, new-gloved for the occasion, which very soon would boldly give the signal for applause.

The curtain is going up! Maranne has barely time to spring into the wings; and suddenly he hears as from far, very far away, the first words of his play, which rise, like a flight of timid birds, into the silence and immensity of the theatre. A terrible moment. Where should he go? What should he do? Remain there leaning against a wing, with straining ear and beating heart? Encourage the actors when he himself stood in so much need of encouragement? He prefers rather to look the peril in the face; and by the little door communicating with the corridor behind the boxes he slips out to a corner box, which he orders to be opened for him softly. "Sh! It is I." Some one is seated in the shadow—a woman, she whom all Paris knows and who is hiding herself from the public gaze. André sits down by her side, and so, close to one another, mother and son tremblingly watch the progress of the play.

It astonished the audience at first. This Théâtre des Nouveautés, situated in the very heart of the boulevard, where its portico glitters all illuminated among the great restaurants of the smart clubs; this theatre, to which people were accustomed to come in parties after a luxurious dinner to listen until supper-time to an act or two of some suggestive piece, had become in the hands of its clever manager the most fashionable of all Parisian entertainments, without any very precise character of its own, and partaking something of all, from the fairy-operetta which exhibits undressed women, to the serious modern drama. Cardailhac was especially anxious to justify his title of "Manager of the Nouveautés," and, since the Nabob's millions had been at the back of the undertaking, had made a point of preparing for the boulevardiers the most dazzling surprises. That of this evening surpassed them all; the piece was in verse—and moral.

A moral play!

The old rogue had realized that the moment had arrived

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to try that effect, and he was trying it. After the astonishment of the first minutes, a few disappointed exclamations here and there in the boxes, "Why, it is in verse!" the house began to feel the charm of this invigorating and healthy piece, as if there had been sprinkled on it, in its rarefied atmosphere, some fresh and pungent essence, an elixir of life perfumed with thyme from the hillside.

"Ah! this is nice—it is restful."

Such was the general sense, a thrill of ease, a spasm of pleasure accompanying each line. That fat old Hemerlingue found it restful, puffing in his stage-box on the ground floor as in a trough of cerise satin. It was restful also to that tall Suzanne Bloch, her hair dressed in the antique way, ringlets flowing over a diadem of gold; and near her, Amy Férat, all in white like a bride and with sprigs of orange-blossom in her fluffy hair, it was restful to her also, you may be sure.

A crowd of demi-mondaines were present, some very fat, with a dirty greasiness acquired in a hundred seraglios, three chins, and an air of stupidity; others absolutely green in spite of their paint, as if they had been dipped in a bath of that arsenate of copper which is called in the shops "Paris green." These were wrinkled, faded to such a degree that they hid in the back of their boxes, only allowing a portion of a white arm to be seen, a rounded shoulder protruding. Then there were young men about town, flabby and without backbone, those who at that time used to be called *petits crevés*, creatures worn out by dissipation, with stooping necks and drooping lips, incapable of standing erect or of articulating a single word perfectly. And all these people exclaimed with one accord: "This is nice—it is restful." The handsome Moëssard murmured it like a refrain beneath his little fair mustache, while his queen in the stage-box translated it into the barbarism of her foreign tongue. Positively they found it restful. They did not say after what—after what heart-breaking labour, after what forced, idle and useless task.

All these friendly murmurs, united and mingled, began to give to the house an eventful appearance. Success was

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felt in the air, faces became serene again, the women seemed the more beautiful for reflecting enthusiasm, for being moved to glances that were as exciting as applause. André, at his mother's side, thrilled with an unknown pleasure, with that proud delight which a man feels when he stirs the multitude, be he only a singer in a suburban back-yard, with a patriotic refrain and two pathetic notes in his voice. Suddenly the whisperings redoubled, were transformed into a tumult. People were chuckling and fidgeting with excitement. What had happened? Some accident on the stage? André, leaning terrified towards the actors as astonished as himself, saw every opera-glass turned towards the big stage-box which had remained empty until then, and which some one had just entered, who sat down immediately with both his elbows on the velvet ledge, and with his opera-glass drawn from its case, taking his place in gloomy solitude.

In ten days the Nabob had aged twenty years. Violent southern natures like his, if they are rich in enthusiasms, become also more utterly prostrate than others. Since his unseating the unfortunate man had shut himself up in his bedroom, with drawn curtains, no longer wishing even to see the light of day nor to cross over the threshold beyond which life was waiting for him, with the engagements he had undertaken, the promises he had made, a mass of protested bills and writs. The Levantine, gone off to some spa accompanied by her *masseur* and her negress, was totally indifferent to the ruin of the establishment; Bompain—the man in the fez—in frightened bewilderment amid the demands for money, not knowing how to approach his ill-starred master, who persistently kept his bed and turned his face to the wall as soon as business matters were mentioned. His old mother alone remained behind to face the disaster, with the knowledge born of her narrow and straitened experience as a village woman, who knows what a stamped document—a signature—is, and thinks honour is the greatest and best thing in this world. Her peasant's cap made its appearance on every floor of the mansion, examining bills, reforming the domestic arrangements, and fearing neither outcries nor humiliation. At all hours the good

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woman might be seen striding about the Place Vendôme, gesticulating, talking to herself, and saying aloud: "*Te*, I will go and see the bailiff." And never did she consult her son about anything save when it was indispensable, and then only in a few discreet words, while avoiding even a glance at him. To rouse Jansoulet from his torpor it had required de Géry's telegram, dated from Marseilles, announcing that he was on his way back, bringing ten million francs. Ten millions!—that is to say, bankruptcy averted, the possibility of recovering his position—of starting life afresh. And behold our southerner rebounding from the depth of his fall, intoxicated with joy, and full of hope. He ordered the windows to be opened and newspapers to be brought to him. What a magnificent opportunity was this first night of *Revolt* to show himself to the Parisians, who were believing him to have gone under, to enter the great whirlpool once more through the swing door of his box at the Nouveautés! His mother, warned by some instinct, did indeed try to hold him back. Paris now terrified her. She would have liked to carry off her child to some unknown corner of the Midi, to nurse him along with his elder brother—stricken down both of them by the great city. But he was the master. Resistance was impossible to that will of a man spoiled by wealth. She helped him to dress for the occasion, "made him look nice," as she said laughing, and watched him not without a certain pride as he departed, dignified, full of new life, having almost got over the prostration of the preceding days.

After his arrival at the theatre, Jansoulet quickly perceived the commotion which his presence caused in the house. Accustomed to similar curious ovations, he acknowledged them ordinarily without the least embarrassment, with a frank display of his wide and good-natured smile; but this time the manifestation was hostile, almost indignant.

"What! It is he?"

"There he is."

"What impudence!"

Such exclamations from the stalls confusedly rose among

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many others. The retirement in which he had taken refuge for some days past had left him in ignorance of the public exasperation, of the homilies, the statements broadcast in the newspapers, with the corrupting influence of his wealth as their text—articles written for effect, hypocritical phraseology by the aid of which opinion avenges itself from time to time on the innocent for all its own concessions to the guilty. It was a terribly embarrassing exhibition, which gave him at first more sorrow than anger. Deeply moved, he hid his emotion behind his opera-glass, fixing his attention on the least details of the stage arrangements, giving a three-quarters view of his back to the house, but unable to escape the scandalous observation of which he was the victim and which made his ears buzz, his temples beat, the dulled lenses of his opera-glass become full of those whirling multi-coloured circles which are the first symptom of brain disorder.

When the curtain fell at the end of the first act he remained motionless, in the same attitude of embarrassment; the whisperings, now more distinct when they were no longer held in check by the dialogue on the stage, the pertinacity of certain inquisitive people changing their places in order to get a better view of him, obliged him to leave his box and to beat a hurried retreat into the corridors, like a wild beast escaping across a circus from the arena. Beneath the low ceiling in the narrow circular passage of the theatre corridors, he found himself suddenly in the midst of a dense crowd of emasculate youths, journalists, tightly laced women wearing their hats, laughing as part of their trade, their backs against the wall. From box-doors opened for air, mixed and disjointed fragments of conversation were escaping:

"A delightful piece. It is fresh; it is good."

"That Nabob! What impudence!"

"Yes, indeed, it is restful. One feels better for it."

"How is it that he has not yet been arrested?"

"Quite a young man, it seems. It is his first play."

"Bois l'Héry at Mazas! It is impossible. Why, there is the marquise opposite, in the balcony, with a new hat."

"What does that prove? She is at her business as a

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starter of new fashions. It is very pretty, that hat. In Desgrange's racing colours."

"And Jenkins? What is Jenkins doing?"

"At Tunis, with Félicia. Old Brahim has seen them both. It seems that the Bey has begun to take the pearls."

"The deuce he has!"

Farther along, soft voices were murmuring:

"Yes, father, do, do go speak to him. See how lonely he looks, poor man!"

"But, children, I do not know him."

"Never mind. Just a bow. Something to show him that he is not utterly deserted."

Thereupon a little old gentleman, very red in the face and wearing a white tie, stepped quickly in front of the Nabob, and ceremoniously raised his hat to him with great respect. With what gratitude, what a smile of eager goodwill was that solitary greeting returned, that greeting from a man whom Jansoulet did not know, whom he had never seen, and who had yet exerted a weighty influence upon his destiny; for, but for the *père* Joyeuse, the chairman of the board of the Territorial would probably have shared the fate of the Marquis de Bois l'Héry. Thus it is that in the tangle of modern society, that great web of interests, ambitions, services accepted and rendered, all the various worlds are connected, united beneath the surface, from the highest existences to the most humble; this it is that explains the variegation, the complexity of this study of manners, the collection of the scattered threads of which the writer who is careful of truth is bound to make the background of his story.

In ten minutes the Nabob had been subjected to every manifestation of the terrible ostracism of that Paris world to which he had neither relationship nor serious ties, and whose contempt isolated him more surely than a visiting monarch is isolated by respect—the averted look, the apparently aimless step aside, the hat suddenly put on and pulled down over the eyes. Overcome by embarrassment and shame, he stumbled. Some one said quite loudly, "He is drunk," and all that the poor man could manage to do was

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to return and shut himself up in the salon at the back of his box. Ordinarily, this little retreat was crowded during the intervals between the acts by stock-brokers and journalists. They laughed and smoked and made a great noise; the manager would come to greet his sleeping partner. But on this evening there was nobody. And the absence of Cardailhac, with his keen nose for success, signified fully to Jansoulet the measure of his disgrace.

"What have I done? Why will Paris have no more of me?"

Thus he questioned himself amid a solitude that was accentuated by the noises around, the abrupt turning of keys in the doors of the boxes, the thousand exclamations of an amused crowd. Then suddenly the freshness of his luxurious surroundings, the Moorish lantern casting strange shadows on the brilliant silks of the divan and walls, reminded him of the date of his arrival. Six months! Only six months since he came to Paris! Completely done for and ruined in six months! He sank into a kind of torpor, from which he was roused by the sound of applause and enthusiastic bravos. It was decidedly a great success—this play *Revolt*. There were some passages of strength and satire, and the violent tirades, a trifle over-emphatic but written with youth and sincerity, excited the audience after the idyllic calm of the opening. Jansoulet in his turn wished to hear and see. This theatre belonged to him after all. His place in that stage-box had cost him over a million francs; the very least he could do was to occupy it.

So he seated himself in the front of his box. In the theatre the heat was suffocating in spite of the fans which were vigorously at work, throwing reflections from their bright spangles through the impalpable atmosphere of silence. The house was listening religiously to an indignant and lofty denunciation of the scamps who occupied exalted positions, after having robbed their fellows in those depths from which they were sprung. Certainly, Maranne when he wrote those fine lines had been far from having the Nabob in his mind. But the public saw an allusion in them; and while a triple salvo of applause greeted the conclusion of the speech, all

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heads were turned towards the stage-box on the left with an indignant, openly offensive movement. The poor wretch, pilloried in his own theatre! A pillory which had cost him so dear! This time he made no attempt to escape the insult, but settled himself resolutely in his seat, with arms folded, and braved the crowd that was staring at him—those hundreds of faces raised in mockery, that virtuous *tout Paris* which had seized upon him as a scapegoat and was driving him into the wilderness, after having laden him with the burden of all its own crimes.

A pretty gang, truly, for a manifestation of that kind! Opposite, the box of a bankrupt banker, the wife and her lover sitting next each other in the front row, the husband behind in the shadow, voluntarily inconspicuous and solemn. Near them the frequent trio of a mother who has married her daughter in accordance with the personal inclination of her own heart, in order to make a son-in-law of her lover. Then irregular households, courtesans exhibiting the price of shame, diamonds like circlets of fire riveted around arms and neck. And those groups of emasculate youths, with their open collars and painted eyebrows, whose shirts of embroidered cambric and white satin corsets people used to admire in the guest-chambers at Compiègne; those *mignons*, of the time of Agrippa, calling each other among themselves: "My heart—My dear girl." An assemblage of all the scandals, all the turpitudes, consciences sold or for sale, the vice of an epoch devoid of greatness and without originality, intent on making trial of the caprices of every other age.

And these were the people who were insulting him and crying: "Away with thee, thou art unworthy!"

"Unworthy—I! But my worth is a hundred times greater than that of any among you, wretches that you are! You make my millions a reproach to me, but who has helped me to spend them? Thou, cowardly and treacherous comrade, who hidest thy sick pasha-like obesity in the corner of thy stage-box! I made thy fortune along with my own in the days when we shared all things in brotherly community. Thou, pale marquis—I paid a hundred thousand

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francs at the club in order to save thee from shameful expulsion!

"Thee I covered with jewels, hussy, letting thee pass for my mistress, because that kind of thing makes a good impression in our world—but without ever asking thee anything in return. And thou, brazen-faced journalist, who for brain hast all the dirty sediment of thy inkstand, and on thy conscience as many spots as thy queen has on her skin, thou thinkest that I have not paid thee thy price and that is why thy insults are heaped on me. Yes, yes; stare at me, you vermin! I am proud. My worth is above yours."

All that he was thus saying to himself mentally, in an ungovernable rage, visible in the quivering of his pale, thick lips. The unfortunate man, who was nearly mad, was about perhaps to shout it aloud in the silence, to denounce that insulting crowd—who knows?—to spring into the midst of it, kill one of them—ah! kill *one* of them—when he felt a light tap on his shoulder, and a fair head came before his eyes, serious and frank, two hands held out, which he grasped convulsively, like a drowning man.

"Ah! dear friend, dear—" the poor man stammered. But he had not the strength to say more. This emotion of joy coming suddenly in the midst of his fury melted him into a sobbing torrent of tears, and stifled words. His face became purple. He motioned "Take me away." And, stumbling in his walk, leaning on de Géry's arm, he only managed to cross the threshold of his box before he fell prostrate in the corridor.

"Bravo! Bravo!" cried the house in reply to the speech which the actor had just finished; and there was a noise like a hailstorm, and stamping of enthusiastic feet while the great lifeless body, raised with difficulty by the scene-shifters, was carried through the brightly lighted wings, crowded with people pressing in their curiosity round the stage, excited by the atmosphere of success and who hardly noticed the passage of the inert and vanquished man, borne on men's arms like some victim of a riot. They laid him on a couch in the room where the properties were stored, Paul de Géry at his side, with a doctor and two

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porters who eagerly lent all the assistance in their power. Cardailhac, extremely busy over his play, had sent word that he should come to hear the news "directly, after the fifth act."

Bleeding after bleeding, cuppings, mustard leaves—nothing brought even a quiver to the skin of the patient, insensible apparently to all the remedies usually employed in cases of apoplexy. The whole being seemed to be surrendering to death, to be preparing the way for the rigidity of the corpse; and this in the most sinister place in the world, this chaos, lighted by a lantern merely, amid which there lie about pell-mell in the dust all the remains of former plays—gilt furniture, curtains with gay fringes, coaches, boxes, card-tables, dismantled staircases and balusters, among ropes and pulleys, a confusion of out-of-date theatrical properties, thrown down, broken, and damaged. Bernard Jansoulet, as he lay among this wreckage, his shirt opened over his chest, pale and covered with blood, was indeed a man come to the shipwreck of his life, bruised and tossed aside along with the pitiful ruins of his artificial luxury dispersed and broken up, in the whirlpool of Paris. Paul, with aching heart, contemplated the scene sadly, that face with its short nose, preserving in its inertia the savage yet kindly expression of an inoffensive creature that tried to defend itself before it died and had not time to bite. He reproached himself bitterly with his inability to be of any service to him. Where was that fine project of leading Jansoulet across the bogs, of guarding him against ambushes? All that he had been able to do had been to save a few millions for him, and even these had come too late.

The windows had just been thrown open upon the curved balcony over the boulevard, now at the height of its noisy and brilliant stir. The theatre was surrounded by, as it were, a plinth of gas-jets, a zone of fire which brought the gloomiest recesses into light, pricked out with revolving lanterns, like stars journeying through a dark sky. The play was over. People were coming out. The black and dense crowd on the steps was dispersing over the white

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pavements, on its way to spread through the town the news of a great success and the name of an unknown author who to-morrow would be triumphant and famous. A splendid evening, so that the windows of the restaurants were lighted up in gaiety and files of carriages passed through the streets at a late hour. This tumult of festivity which the poor Nabob had loved so keenly, which seemed to go so well with the dizzy whirl of his existence, roused him to life for a moment. His lips moved, and into his dilated eyes, turned towards de Géry, there came before he died a pained expression, beseeching and protesting, as though to call upon him as witness of one of the greatest and most cruel acts of injustice that Paris has ever committed.

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THE PORTRAITS OF ALPHONSE DAUDET

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THE PORTRAITS OF ALPHONSE DAUDET

ALPHONSE DAUDET
Aged 20 years.
From a drawing by Lucien Métivet after James Tissot.

FOR any one bent on a strict enumeration of the portraits of Alphonse Daudet it would be essential to read again and to annotate two of the master's books, *Le petit Chose* and *Vingt Années de Paris*. These are two precious autobiographies, to be studied in conjunction with Ernest Daudet's *Mon Frère et Moi* and Léon Daudet's *La Vie de mon Père*. But in the present case the process would be excessive, as it would entail labours far beyond the limits here assigned to us, limits which make it necessary for us to give only summary and general indications, short variations on the principal portraits of a writer at the different periods of his life.

We propose therefore only to set down a few notes by way of contribution to the iconography of the author of *Le Nabab*.

When the young Southerner first came from Nîmes to Paris, where for a short time he acted as secretary to the Duc de Morny, he was a beautiful youth, a hero of romance incarnate in an ardent poet, impetuous, original, athirst for life and eager for glory. His type was that of the young Apollo; beneath the ebony

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fleece of his long black hair, he had the face of some young god in the guise of a herdsman of the Abruzzi such as Léopold Robert has printed in his famous picture, *The Return of the Reapers*. A portrait of him at this early period in crayon by James Tissot has preserved the expression of that delicate face, lighted up by a pair of magnificent eyes full of eager curiosity, and enframed in a slight, youthful beard, grown in a point. We recognise the little Provençal Daudet painted for us in after-years under the name of Gaussin d'Armandy, in his *Sapho*. His appearance proved his best introduction to everybody, and he was most cordially received in all artistic circles. From this time forth the poet of *Les Prunes* and the writer of *Le petit Chaperon-Rouge* was a celebrity in Parisian studios, and it is certain that many studies were painted and modelled of a head worthy of one of the statues of Phidias, or of the medals of Athens and of Argos, but none of these remained in his family. Mme. Daudet remembers having heard of a portrait of her husband painted at this period (between 1860 and 1865), by the military artist Alphonse de Neuville, but no one knows

ALPHONSE DAUDET
In 1868.
From a photograph by Carjat.

ALPHONSE DAUDET
In 1875.
From a sketch.

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what has become of it. Many other sketches, medallions, drawings, and pictures made from Daudet between 1860 and 1870 must certainly have gone astray in the same manner, so true is it that more than half the portraits of a famous man are always lost to posterity. As to photographs of Daudet between twenty and thirty, they must have been very numerous, for this was the time of his first travels. Alfred Delvau was his companion at first, and has recorded their wanderings in a book called *Du Pont des Arts au Pont de Khel.* Then Daudet went to Algeria, where his impaired health made it necessary for him to spend a winter or two. Of this period of his life we have only a few photographs taken by his friend Carjat and other disciples of Daguerre. We reproduce a drawing after one of these, taken about 1867–1868, which shows the sharpened profile, the gazelle-like eyes, and the luxuriant locks of the exquisite writer who was then signing the *Lettres de mon Moulin*, one of his most perfect works.

ALPHONSE DAUDET
In 1876.
After a portrait by Feyen-Perrin.

ALPHONSE DAUDET.
After a drawing by De Liphart, 1882.

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The Portraits of Alphonse Daudet

ALPHONSE DAUDET
In 1885.
From an etching in *Les Célébrités Contemporaines.*

The first oil-painting of any value representing Daudet, which is still extant, is a portrait executed in 1876 by Feyen-Perrin, then famous for his marine idyls of the Bay of Cancale. The Daudet he shows us is at the apogee of his physical vigour, a bard with locks as luxuriant as those of Absalom, and a jet-black beard divided into two points beneath a thick mustache. The face has become broader, the nose more strongly marked, the eyes more confident and more profound. This is the novelist in the full flush of his success, the handsome Daudet that all Parisians of the end of the nineteenth century would have known or met down to the day when illness finally kept him a prisoner in his own house.

Rather later, about 1882, the draughtsman De Liphart made another portrait of Alphonse Daudet for the periodical *La Vie Moderne.* It is one of the best likenesses among his portraits, marked by less vigour

ALPHONSE DAUDET
In 1895.
After a sketch by Louis Montégut.

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and brutality of execution than Feyen-Perrin's version. This head of Liphart's has become the most popular presentment of the novelist in France. It was reproduced as an etching, and typographically in the newspapers, the magazines, and the cheap editions of Daudet's works. No less sincere a study is the etching which appeared in *Les Célébrités Contemporaines* pub-

ALPHONSE DAUDET IN HIS STUDIO.
From a photograph by Dornac, 1896.

lished by Quantin. These portraits, which we reproduce, are the most characteristic we can instance. There are, of course, many others, representing him in Paris surrounded by his family, at his villa at Champrosay, at Auteuil with Edmond de Goncourt, etc. A fashionable painter even sketched out a picture of his *salon*, with all the artists and men of letters who frequented it. But all these studies of him are works of more general interest, and give no definite idea of physiognomy such as we gather from an actual study

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ALPHONSE DAUDET.
Caricature by André Gill, 1879.

of a head. We may therefore pass over these anecdotic works, interesting by virtue of their setting and accessories, but unsuitable for reproduction in a miniature iconography.

From 1890 onward it is the invalid Daudet who appears to us, the unhappy victim of ataxy, whom the painter Eugène Carrière has expressed better than any one else, in the blurred atmosphere of his *Gresailles*, through which we divine the figure of the novelist pale, broken, and ghost-like, vanquished by disease. This same picture appears in the sketch by Montégut, and again in the photograph taken by Dornac, in 1896, of the wasted, haggard master in his study, surrounded by his books. These last portraits are painful, for they express a physical decay pitiful in a man still young, who ought, in the ordinary course, to

ALPHONSE DAUDET.
Caricature by Luqué, 1884, in *Les Hommes du Jour.*

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have been spared for many years longer to French literature.

Alphonse Daudet was as popular in France as a writer of his artistic feeling, his preoccupation with style, and his delicate psychology could well be. He had not the universal popularity of Dickens among the English, but he penetrated into the masses to the same extent as George Sand, and far more deeply than such pure masters of style as Flaubert and the Goncourts. Caricatures of the novelist, a sure sign of popular fame, abounded. His friend André Gill often represented him at the different periods of his success. We reproduce one of these quips, and also a caricature by Luqué, which appeared in the weekly journal, *Les Hommes du Jour*.

ALPHONSE DAUDET.
From his last photograph.

Mme. Daudet possesses a fine drawing by the painter La Gandara of her husband on his death-bed. Among the plastic representations of the great novelist, we may mention a bust executed in his lifetime by Arthur le Duc, Falguières's statue, unveiled in the Square at Nîmes in 1901, and the monument by Saint-Marceaux, exhibited at the *Salon* of 1900, and shortly to be set up in the Champs Élysées, near the Avenue Gabriel.

The sketch by Mr. William Rothenstein, reproduced as the frontispiece to this volume, is a very clever and remarkably faithful likeness drawn by the

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admirable English artist some ten years ago, when he was passing through Paris. It is the most agreeable and the most life-like of the portraits that show Alphonse Daudet already paralyzed by disease.

OCTAVE UZANNE.

THE END

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